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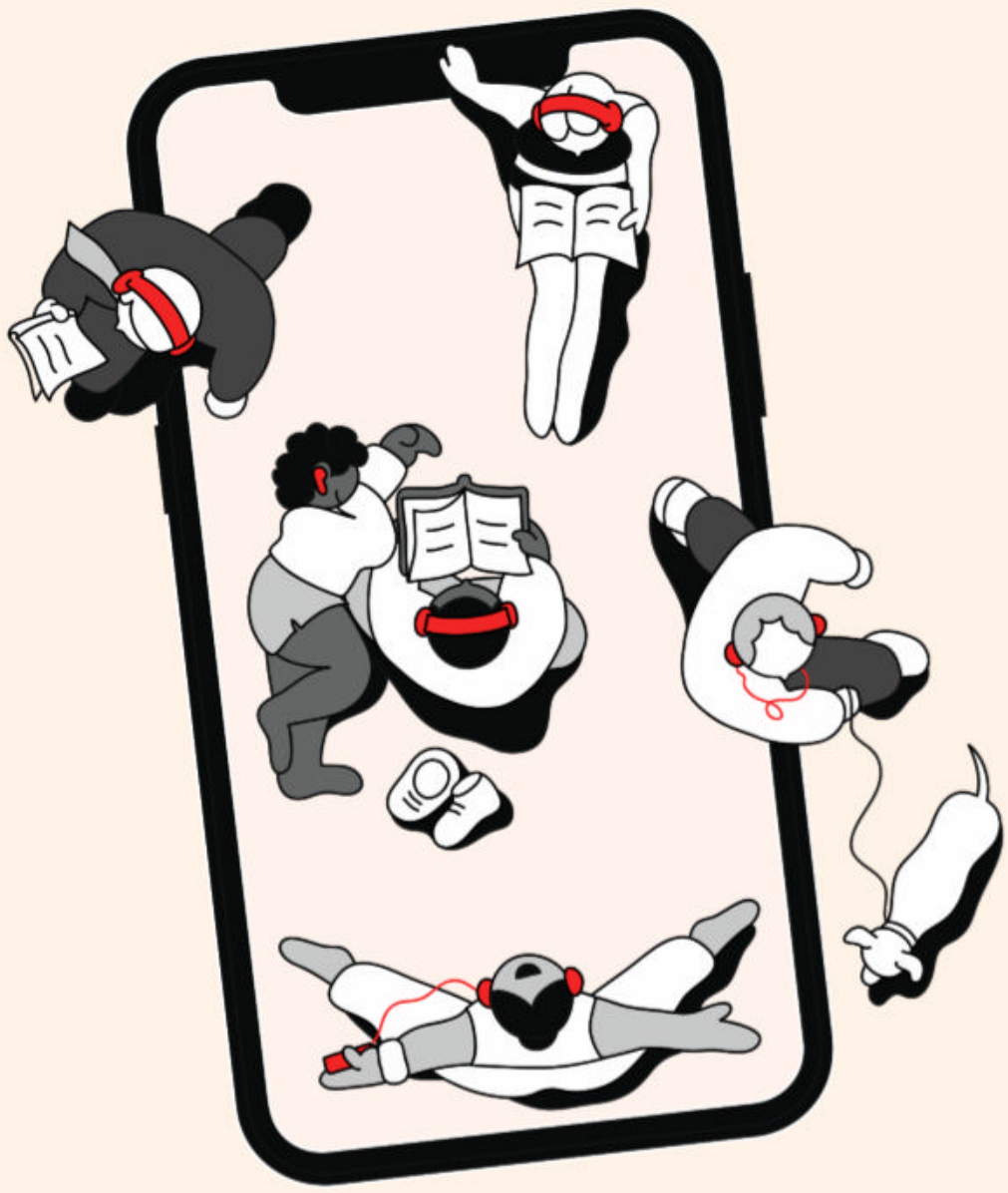
THE NEW YORKER

FEB. 8, 2021



THE NEW YORKER

FEBRUARY 8, 2021

DRAWINGS *Ellis Rosen, Matilda Borgström, Liza Donnelly, Michael Maslin, Elisabeth McNair, Zachary Kanin, Liana Finck, Edward Koren, Carolita Johnson, Roz Chast, Ali Solomon, Jeremy Nguyen, Drew Dernavich, Frank Cotham, Will McPhail* SPOTS *Marie-Helene Jeeves*

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Charles Simic (*Poem, p. 37*), a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, published "Come Closer and Listen" in 2019.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

THE NEW YORKER INTERVIEW

Rachel Syme talks with Michelle Pfeiffer about the choices she's made during a long career in Hollywood.

ANNALS OF GASTRONOMY

For a new generation, Jiayang Fan writes, bubble tea is an Instagram-friendly mark of Asian identity.

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LEFT: CLÉMENT SOULMAGNON; RIGHT: CHOO

THE MAIL

WORKING WOMEN

It was this historian's pleasure to follow Jill Lepore as she showed how the meaning of work has changed over time (A Critic at Large, January 18th). She notes that feminists in the nineteen-seventies called for the recognition of housework as work. In fact, there was considerable debate within the women's movement about demanding wages for housework. While we acknowledged the value of housework, many of us worried that getting paid for it would lock women into domestic labor, instead of expanding our access to all forms of paid work.

Although wages for housework did not become widely adopted, fears about the siloing of women's labor have been borne out. The paid labor force has become more gender-diverse, but women still perform the bulk of housework, whether unpaid in their own homes or as the majority of the "eighty per cent of U.S. employment . . . in the service sector" that Lepore mentions. Many of these women hold jobs as cleaners, cooks, and food-service workers, and increasingly as caregivers. This work is among the lowest paid in the U.S., and, because it often entails proximity to other people, it puts millions at increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Let us hope that caregiving and service work will lose their historically close association with women and that continued awareness and activism will bring recognition, as well as wage equality, to workers in this sector.

Sonya Michel
Professor Emerita of History
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Silver Spring, Md.

WILDERNESS PROTECTION

Nick Paumgarten, in his profile of the sportswear maker and "Rocky Mountain pariah" David Lesh, portrays Lesh as an outlaw freestyle skier whose antics have led to personal legal troubles ("Bad Influencer," January 18th). The article doesn't reckon as fully as I would have hoped with the harm that Lesh's brand of toxic masculinity inflicts upon outdoor winter recreation and on federally protected lands. As a former ski patroller in South Lake Tahoe, in California, I have seen firsthand the damage wrought by people who seek to imitate characters such as Lesh. This season alone, thousands have visited our local backcountry ski area, mimicking the daredevil behavior that they have seen online. This often results in dangerous rescue missions, which put first responders, ski patrols, other outdoor enthusiasts, and the ecosystem itself at risk. It also drains financial resources from our rural community, which is already at a breaking point because of COVID-19. I worry that this article, by focussing primarily on the story of an irreverent bad boy, only gives Lesh more of the attention he craves, without delving into safety issues and environmental concerns.

Christina Cataldo
New York City

BEGIN AGAIN

I was struck by Margaret Talbot's piece about learning new skills as an adult (Books, January 18th). After signing up, on a whim, for an art class at the age of sixty-seven, I was astonished to discover that I have some artistic aptitude. More important, as I pursued art classes and started learning the body-movement practice of Qigong, I found that my attitude toward learning was very different from what it had been when I was young. I am much more patient, fortified by the knowledge that struggling to learn new things is just what my senior brain needs to remain fit. But, to be perfectly honest, learning to read music was too much—I gave that up after my four-month clarinet rental ended.

Gail Cooper
Oakland, 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.

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General information about the safe and effective use of XOFLUZA.
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For more information, go to www.xofluza.com

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In an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, many New York City venues are closed. Here's a selection of culture to be found around town, as well as online and streaming.

FEBRUARY 3 – 9, 2021

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

President Biden has earned the nickname Amtrak Joe because of his enthusiasm for railways. With the newly opened **Moynihan Train Hall,** New Yorkers might begin to see how he feels. The soaring marble, glass, and steel space is on Eighth Avenue, across from Penn Station—the renovation, by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, cost more than a billion and a half dollars—and is graced by first-rate public art, including "The Hive" (pictured), a stalactite-like skyline by the Berlin-based duo Elmgreen & Dragset.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN KAUFMAN

MUSIC

Ani DiFranco: "Revolutionary Love"

FOLK So much of Ani DiFranco's career feels like an act of rebellion: the blunt songs she began writing as a precocious kid; the independent music label she started in her twenties, after refusing to sign with the corporate record companies that had been courting her. It's perhaps surprising, then, that "Revolutionary Love"—an album centered on today's political turbulence—isn't seething with the barbed defiance of her earlier work. Inspired by "See No Stranger," a book by the Sikh-American activist and lawyer Valarie Kaur, DiFranco instead endorses love and compassion as radical tools to process rage, grief, and tumult. Robust melodies, padded with streaks of soul and jazz that represent some of DiFranco's fullest productions yet, prop up a challenging attempt at peace and healing.—*Julyssa Lopez*

"The Glitch"

CLASSICAL The resourceful conductor and impresario Neal Goren, best known for his work with the late, lamented Gotham Chamber Opera, maintains his customary penchant for innovation as the artistic director of Catapult Opera. This week, the fledgling outfit presents "The Glitch," the first offering in a new series of commissioned works expressly intended for online viewing. The seventeen-minute chamber opera, conducted by Goren and composed by Nico Muhly, with a libretto, by Greg Pierce, based on true events, features the mezzo-soprano Krysty Swann, the baritone Lester Lynch, and the pianist Adam Tendler. The video, directed by Catapult's executive director, Marcus Pierce, subtly evokes the suspension of disbelief intrinsic to live theatre.—*Steve Smith (Feb. 3; catapultopera.org.)*

Goat Girl: "On All Fours"

ROCK The four members of London's Goat Girl signed to Rough Trade as teen-agers, in 2016. On the band's self-titled début, from 2018, their youth became most transparent in their apparent attempts to mask it: every song is delivered with a world-weariness, at once jaded and flecked with angst. Set to a guitar crunch, the music felt beamed in from the nineties. Goat Girl's follow-up, "On All Fours," aligns more neatly with the present. The songs are laced with electronic effects—softly hiccupping beats, airy synths—that allude to dance music without necessarily encouraging dancing. Where nineties rock trafficked in irony and solipsism, these righteous lyrics are consumed with contemporary injustices. As the music grows dreamier, its bite hardens.—*Jay Ruttenberg*

"London Pirate Radio Adverts 1984-1993, Vol. 1"

ELECTRONIC For many fans of pre-Internet British pirate-radio recordings, hearing the ads is half the fun. Rough and ready by definition—and made with an approximate budget of zero—they emit a grimy, found-object delight. The forty spots gathered on "London Pirate Radio Adverts 1984-1993, Vol. 1," covering the era when illegal U.K. stations began to concentrate heavily on dance music, are heady time capsules, whether they're hawking an "Under 18s Disco" or a "Ravers Dateline," a phone number that single partiers could allegedly call to find people to "socialize with, go to raves with, or even start a long-lasting relationship with."—*Michaelangelo Matos*

Anna Netrebko

OPERA In the course of Anna Netrebko's career, the soprano's formidable set of lungs has enabled her to bring an opulent tone and propulsive phrasing to some of opera's most taxing lyric and spinto roles. There was some alarm when she announced, in September, that she had COVID-19. "Everything will be fine!" she assured her Instagram followers from her hospital bed. For her streaming recital in the "Met Stars Live in Concert" series, which has been rescheduled from the fall, Netrebko sings art songs by Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, and Strauss—all masters of rapturous melody—amid the stately balustrades and galleries of the Spanish Riding School, in Vienna.—*Oussama Zahr (Feb. 6 at 1; metopera.org.)*

Caroline Shaw: "Narrow Sea"

CLASSICAL The composer Caroline Shaw has had a rich and multifaceted career in contemporary music. Since becoming the youngest-ever winner of the Pulitzer Prize for music, in 2013, she has produced for the rappers Kanye West and Nas, composed a movie score for the 2018 drama "Madeline," and collaborated with the National and Arcade Fire's Richard Reed Parry. Her new album, "Narrow Sea," comprised primarily of compositions she wrote for Sō Percussion, the soprano Dawn Upshaw, and the pianist Gilbert Kalish, channels water as a spiritual vehicle between here and the hereafter and conjures the euphoria of transitioning (crossing over, leaving the world behind). These works are texturally stunning—percussively sharp yet melodically smooth, fluid, and even bubbly, constantly playing with the tensions of not knowing what lies beyond but seeking peace nevertheless. In her continued examination of folk songs, complex rhythms, and the juxtaposition of tune and pulse, Shaw's music grows ever more mystic.—*Sheldon Pearce*

JAZZ

As his many admirers will attest, the saxophonist Joe Lovano can turn on the juice, blowing hard and strong, whenever necessary. His credentials as a full-blooded jazz swinger and an unfettered free improviser are perfectly in order. His most satisfying work, though, may be on display when he cools his jets and allows his gentle side to come to the fore. On **"Garden of Expression,"** he picks up where his 2019 record, "Trio Tapestry," left off, communing with understated poise on original compositions with the pianist Marilyn Crispell and the drummer Carmen Castaldi. The mood now is equally low-key—the final track is titled "Zen Like"—yet enchantment never tips over into stasis. Lovano can render a memorable musical phrase into a poem, and his selfless cohorts are equally attuned to the vitality of restraint.—*Steve Futterman*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRISON FREEMAN

AT THE GALLERIES

Can you spot the superpower of the wonder women in "Sisters of War" (pictured), a wall-filling vinyl mural by Jolene Nenibah Yazzie, on view (through March 6) in the dynamic group show **"Native Feminisms,"** at Apexart? It's the power to shatter taboos. Yazzie, whose tribal affiliations are Diné, Comanche, and White Mountain Apache, has outfitted the trio in hats historically worn by male Diné warriors. Her own experience competing in the traditional men's category at powwows—the liberation she feels, the bullying she encounters—is the subject of another piece here, the Ojibwe filmmaker Marcella Ernest's dreamlike documentary collage "Because of Who I Am."The film alternates on a monitor with two hypnotic animations by the Anishinaabe-Métis digital visionary Elizabeth LaPensée, who treats ancestral imagery of the natural world with an eco-poetic futurism. Nearby, an exquisite miniature fringed-leather tipi by Sheldon Raymore, an artist from the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, memorializes "two-spirit" people of fluid gender. If the show, which was curated by Elizabeth S. Hawley with an eye for beauty and a heart for politics, has a rallying cry, it's supplied by a lively poster from the Diné artist Demian DinéYazhi' and R.I.S.E. (Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment): "Decolonize Feminism."—*Andrea K. Scott*

ART

"Albers and Morandi"

In this show, subtitled "Never Finished," the Zwirner gallery pairs two artists who can seem bizarrely mismatched: Josef Albers, the starchy German-American abstract painter and color theorist, who died in 1976, at the age of eighty-eight, and Giorgio Morandi, the seraphic Italian still-life painter, who died in 1964, at the age of seventy-three. Albers, who was wedded to a format of three or four nested, hard-edged squares, is academic in spirit—easy to admire but hard to like. Morandi, transfixed by the bottles and vases in his studio for fifty years, is deeply poetic. Yet viewing them together electrifies—this is one of the best-installed shows that I've ever seen—as their works' extremes play off each other. Think of it as a pas de deux of a drill sergeant (Albers) and an enchanter (Morandi). Most of the pieces in the show (twenty-three by each artist) are small. This was Morandi's habitual scale and Albers's most successful one. The soft cosmos of Morandi is both relieved and refreshed by the architectonics of Albers, and vice versa. Neither artist looked over his shoulder at trends of the day. They were brothers in perseverance.—*Peter Schjeldahl (davidzwirner.com)*

"Downtown 2021"

Downtown New York is the Walt Whitman of places: it contains multitudes and contradicts itself. If you think it begins and ends in lower Manhattan, Sam Gordon wants to open your mind. The artist-curator organized the inspired polyphonic group show "Downtown 2021," at La Mama Galleria, to propose that the downtown spirit may be best reflected at galleries—many of them artist-run—in Brooklyn and Queens. (The exhibition is on view Fridays and Saturdays, through Feb. 20.) Works by about thirty painters, ceramicists, photographers, choreographers, filmmakers, and installationists advocate for the outer-borough spaces that have shown them, from the nonprofit feminist coöperative A.I.R., established in 1972 and now housed in Dumbo, to Zak's, which the young sculptor-to-watch Zak Kitnick began as a lark in his studio, in 2015. (The show includes a handsome, if gnomic, game table by Kitnick, made of bronze, brass, copper, and steel, from the Bushwick gallery Clearing.) Most of the art here is new; a noteworthy exception is the elegant formalism of the established, but under-recognized, Black sculptor Helen Evans Ramsaran, whose 1996 bronze "The Seat of Power" is a testament to the discerning vision of the Bed-Stuy gallery Welancora.—*Andrea K. Scott (lamama.org)*

Raven Halfmoon

"Okla Homma to Manahatta," the title of this young sculptor's striking show at the Ross + Kramer gallery, pairs the Choctaw phrase that gives Halfmoon's native Oklahoma its name with the Lenape word for Manhattan. Her ceramics are similarly hybrid: a citizen of the Caddo Nation, Halfmoon draws on indigenous pottery traditions that date back thousands of years using a distinctly personal and contemporary approach. Some of the big, expressive works here feature riveting figurative imagery. The rough-hewn rectangular block of crimson-and-black glazed stoneware in "ONE'-TEH" is composed of human faces; in "Quarter Horse, Quarter Indian," the eyes of a riderless Appaloosa are encircled in dripping red. The latter marks echo the artist's signature, which is painted prominently on each of her works, a splatter effect that evokes both real violence and, acerbically, pop-horror aesthetics.—*Johanna Fateman (rkgallery.com)*

Reggie Burrows Hodges

Using matte-black paint to render the backgrounds of his canvases, as well as the bodies and faces of his figures, this Black American painter makes ingenious use of so-called negative space as both a metaphor for hegemonic white culture and an expression of memory's blur. (The artist's impressive New York début is currently on view at Karma.) Hodges's scenes—which also employ a beautiful, muted palette of violet, yellow, green, orange, red, and blue—are consistently compelling, thanks to his paint handling and to their seductive narrative quality. But the subject matter and the pictorial scope vary dramatically. The intimate "Danale's Mirror" captures a private moment: a woman sits cross-legged on the floor, holding a mascara wand, tilting her head with the graceful, straight-backed posture of a dancer. "Hurdling: Green" portrays a leaping athlete and, at first glance, might suggest an abstract study of motion, but fuchsia shorts and reaching limbs soon emerge from the dark background—evidence of the painter's alchemical command of gesture and color.—*J.F. (karmakarma.org)*

DANCE

A.B.T. Studio Company

During an upstate residency last fall, the junior troupe of American Ballet Theatre rehearsed and filmed two performance programs, each including at least one première by a notable choreographer. On the evenings of Feb. 9 and Feb. 10, those programs are broadcast for free on the company's YouTube channel. Created just before studios closed in March, "La Follia Variations," by Lauren Lovette, of New York City Ballet, is a classical piece, full of hope. "For What Is It All Worth?," by the recently retired Alvin Ailey star Hope Boykin, was made months later and responds to young, protesting voices.—*Brian Seibert (abt.org)*

COURTESY APEXART

Dance Theatre of Harlem

The company restarts its digital platform, DTH on Demand, on Feb. 6, with "Passage." Choreographed by Claudia Schreier to a commissioned score by Jessie Montgomery, the work was made for the 2019 Virginia Arts Festival, which marked the four-hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Africans in British North America. Schreier handles the subject abstractly, with a watery yet tidy depiction of collective struggle as it ebbs and flows, falls and rises.—*B.S. (dancetheatreofharlem.org/dthondemand)*

Martha Graham Dance Company

This month, the company's digital offerings focus on recent additions to the repertory—works inspired by Graham rather than made by her. On Feb. 6, the selection is "Deo," a 2019 effort by Maxine Doyle, a creator of "Sleep No More," and Bobbi Jene Smith, a former Batsheva dancer who's lately become a sought-after choreographer. Drawing on Graham's interest in Greek myths, the dance, for an all-female ensemble, mines the story of Demeter and Persephone for vivid images of mortality, grief, mothers, and daughters, embodied in an uninhibited, highly sensual style.—*B.S. (marthagraham.org)*

The Washington Ballet

As the pandemic has worn on, companies have come up with ways to safely convene small groups of dancers to make new work, mostly for digital consumption. The latest edition of the Washington Ballet's "Create in Place," shown on Marquee TV, includes two such ballets, in-house creations by dancers on the company roster, filmed in beautiful outdoor spaces near Washington, D.C., and performed by members of both the studio company (made up of younger dancers) and the main ensemble. "Womb of Heaven" was inspired by Yuval Noah Harari's best-selling exploration of the ins and outs of our species, "Sapiens." "Something Human" touches on everyday behavior and the mundane ways in which people pursue happiness.—*Marina Harss (marquee.tv)*

PODCASTS

Chicano Squad

This podcast, from Frequency Machine and Vox Media, explores a little-known chapter in the history of American justice—that of a team of five young Latino homicide detectives in the Houston Police Department during the late seventies, who were tasked with a daunting Spanish-language caseload amid a volatile climate of anti-Mexican bigotry and police violence. Narrated by the actor Cristela Alonzo ("Cars 3"), the series beautifully situates its narrative in time and space, opening with vivid stories about a melee at a Cinco de Mayo celebration in 1978 and agitation over the 1977 murder of José Campos Torres, a Vietnam veteran, by Houston police. Though marred by occasional off notes, the writing, narration, and production include color and humor ("Everybody used to go skinny-dippin' in the bayou," a local says. "Come on, now!") that give a serious story warmth and recognizable human texture, à la "The Wire."—*Sarah Larson*

Ghost Town(ing)

"You can't eat the view, but you can't live without it," a resident of Walden, Colorado, says in "Ghost Town(ing)," the new season of "The Modern West," from Wyoming Public Media and PRX. The speaker is the father of the series' host and senior producer, Melodie Edwards; he has worked locally in timber, oil, and fly-fishing supplies, but these days work is scarce. Edwards explores boom-and-bust cycles in Walden and other rural towns, and the phenomenon of Western ghost towning in the context of history, the ethos and myths of the American West, the personalities that gravitate there, and the economic forces that buffet it. (Today, these include the whims of the super-rich, as when an Oklahoma businessman buys up much of Walden's Main Street and then neglects it.) It's a vivid, engaging series, enlivened by memorable details: moose hunts, dance halls, an old-timer who rides his horse into a saloon.—*S.L.*

MOVIES

By the Sea

Romantic doom hangs heavy in the sun-streaked, blue-tinged air of the Mediterranean coast in this 2015 erotic melodrama, set in the early nineteen-seventies, written and directed by Angelina Jolie. She and Brad Pitt play a married couple, Vanessa and Roland Bertrand, who are troubled New York artists. A retired dancer, Vanessa now spends her time berating Roland, a famed but blocked writer, for the sake of whose inspiration they take a seaside hotel room in France for the summer. There, they become obsessed with a newlywed couple (Mélanie Laurent and Melvil Poupaud), whom they drag into their reckless sexual games. Working with the cinematographer Christian Berger, Jolie frames the actors in locked-down, off-balance images that evoke wide-eyed terror at the movie's voracious cruelty as well as its confessional agonies. Although the actors aren't unhinged enough for the scathing conceit, and the script

PODCAST DEPT.

"The Messenger," from Spotify, explores the life and work of the thirty-eight-year-old Ugandan musician, activist, and parliament member known as Bobi Wine, whose campaign to unseat Uganda's longtime strongman President, Yoweri Museveni, has led to a people-power movement, protests, and violent crackdowns in Uganda, drawing the attention of Western entities from NPR to Brian Eno. Hosted by the Sudanese-American rapper Bas, who also wrote the warmly appealing theme music, the series elegantly weaves together Bobi Wine's story (growing up in the slums of Kampala, meeting his future wife at theatre camp, undergoing a political awakening, surviving state-sanctioned violence) with context about the legacy of British colonialism in Uganda and African musician-activists such as Fela Kuti. Musically rich and compellingly listenable, it's full of good tape from memorable characters and questions about celebrity, art, populism, politics, and power. "If you have fame, what responsibility do you have to use that for the people?" Bas asks. "How far should you be willing to go?" In January, Museveni was declared the winner of the Presidential election, Wine contested the results, and Ugandan security forces surrounded his house; the series concludes in February, with whatever happens next.—*Sarah Larson*

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA LANNES

is more of a mechanism than a revelation, Jolie is more visually inventive than many more celebrated filmmakers, and she ventures with an admirable boldness into mysterious and alluring psychological territory.—*Richard Brody (Streaming on Netflix, Vudu, and other services.)*

Cradle Will Rock

In 1937, Orson Welles and John Houseman tried—and, just barely, succeeded—in putting on Marc Blitzstein's "The Cradle Will Rock," a musical drama about prostitutes, unions, and a lot of other things that musicals were never meant to mention. Tim Robbins's 1999 picture tells the story, or the interlocking stories, of that supercharged age. Houseman (Cary Elwes) and Welles (Angus Macfadyen) are merely part of the procession; we also get the saga of Nelson Rockefeller (John Cusack) paying Diego Rivera (Ruben Blades) to paint a giant mural and then having it destroyed. As if in homage to that lost work, Robbins operates on the mural principle, moving gaily and with high technical fluency from penniless actors (John Turturro and Emily Watson) to sincere socialites, including Countess La Grange (Vanessa Redgrave) and a ravishing Fascist named Margherita Sarfatti (Susan Sarandon). It could have been a mess, and there are patches where Robbins's inspiration wears a little thin; yet, all in all, his ambitious tolerance pays off, and you are happy to be hauled toward the grand—and unashamedly theatrical—finale.—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 12/13/99.) (Streaming on Amazon, iTunes, and other services.)*

Malcolm & Marie

Sam Levinson, a white man, wrote and directed this drama, about Malcolm (John David Washington), a thirtysomething Black director, who, after the acclaimed première of his first feature, returns with his girlfriend, Marie (Zendaya), who's in her twenties and is also Black, to a fancy house that his producers have rented for him (and where the entire movie is set). There, Malcolm vents about a white female critic for the L.A. *Times* who referred to "identity" in her rave review of the film (he denies that his work is "political"). The couple's drama, however, is sparked by another detail: in Malcolm's remarks to the première audience, he forgot to thank Marie, a recovering drug addict whose experiences are represented in his movie. She, in turn, reproaches him for his ingratitude and lack of empathy. The characters launch into tangled tirades that let the actors—especially Zendaya, in her first major dramatic movie role—flaunt their skill, the movie's only redeeming quality. Levinson's reduction of Malcolm to his mouthpiece, and of Marie to Malcolm's conscience, rings hollow and vain. The suave black-and-white cinematography emulates the Hollywood classics that Malcolm reveres.—*R.B. (Streaming on Netflix.)*

My Brother's Wedding

In his second feature, from 1983, Charles Burnett blends raucous comedy with the ambient menace faced by Black people in their neighborhoods and homes. It's a story filled with the presence of guns and their horrific consequences—and with threats of crime and the burden of punishment. A young man named Pierce (Everett Silas), who lives in Los Angeles with his parents and works in their dry-cleaning store, resents his brother, Wendell (Monte Easter), a lawyer, who's engaged to Sonia (Gaye Shannon-Burnett), the daughter of a prosperous doctor (Sy Richardson). Pierce's best friend, Soldier (Ronnie Bell), is about to be released from prison; Soldier is killed in an accident soon after his release, and his funeral will be held on the same day as Wendell and Sonia's wedding, at which Pierce is expected to serve as best man. Burnett fills the film with voices and memories, humor and rage; his vision of neighborhood life has an ample, passionate generosity. The drama of unresolved frustrations and stifled dreams is propelled by a sense of history looming just below the surface.—*R.B. (Streaming on the Criterion Channel.)*

Whispers

For this 1980 documentary, the Lebanese director Maroun Bagdadi travelled his home country, after five years of civil war, with the poet Nadia Tueni, bearing witness not only to the devastation, both physical and spiritual, that Lebanon had endured but to the survivors' devoted efforts at rebuilding cities and businesses, cultural and emotional life. But the film's prime subject is the representation of memory: it follows the photojournalist Nabil Ismaïl as he wanders with Tueni through desolate ruins and rushes through a crowded market street, describing experiences of war in voice-overs that superimpose the horrific recent past onto the immediate surroundings. Bagdadi reveals the proximity of Lebanon's diverse regions and its residents' yearning for national unity through Tueni's interviews with people from a wide range of backgrounds and professions—farmers and entrepreneurs, artists and laborers and students. He films these discussions, along with trenchant cityscapes and views of public life, in an extraordinarily vibrant yet mournful montage of hope and foreboding. In Arabic.—*R.B. (Streaming on Netflix.)*

WHAT TO STREAM

GETTY

The seven films on which Marlene Dietrich and the director Josef von Sternberg collaborated, from 1930 to 1935 (all of which are streaming on the Criterion Channel), created a fusion of performance and style that has yet to be surpassed. The third of them, **"Dishonored,"** from 1931, reveals the secret behind these films' taut mannerism: coolness in the presence of danger, indifference to the threat of death. It's set during the First World War, in Vienna, where a prostitute (Dietrich), a captain's widow, is recruited by the Austrian Secret Service to use her seductive powers to hunt down traitors. But she soon meets her match in an experienced Russian spy (Victor McLaglen) who, at first, escapes her clutches, leading to an international chase that's fuelled by their mutual attraction—which is intensified by the risks that it entails. The elaborate disguises, sophisticated ruses, and arachnid schemes—which Sternberg films in shimmery, showy chiaroscuro—display the elegant beauty of fakery; their ultimate truth is disclosed in Dietrich's insolent smile when facing down men with guns.—*Richard Brody*

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TABLES FOR TWO

Rolo's

853 Onderdonk Ave., Queens

I've always thought of hot dogs, which I love, as inextricably tied to particular, and Pavlovian, places in New York City: plucked from a cart's steamy water near Central Park; encased in ruffled paper and savored, with frothy papaya juice, while standing in the window of Gray's Papaya, gazing upon Amsterdam Avenue; paired with crinkle-cut fries and a milkshake at an umbrella-covered table outside the original Nathan's, at Coney Island. The other night, I inaugurated another New York hot-dog ritual, in the most unlikely of locations—my Brooklyn kitchen.

I'd been surprised to see hot dogs on the menu at Rolo's, a new restaurant and grocery store in Ridgewood, Queens, which seemed to skew Italian, and whose five partners met at Gramercy Tavern. But they sounded delicious, a mix of heritage pork and organic chicken ground in-house, seasoned with ginger, pink salt, white pepper, and milk powder, and sealed in lamb casings—sausage I wouldn't mind seeing made. As I seared them in a cast-iron pan, they released the happy scent of bacon, their taut skin growing crisp, juices sizzling. Sandwiched in toasted Martin's potato buns, they anchored one of the fastest and most satisfying dinners I'd "cooked" in months, heavy on flavor (smoke, spice, a medley of fats) and buoyant of spirit.

If Rolo's has a theme, according to Howard Kalachnikoff, a partner and a former Gramercy Tavern chef de cuisine, it's less Italian than it is, more broadly, "New York." "If you like eating in New York, there's a little Italian involved," pointed out Ben Howell, another partner, who serves as the general manager and beverage director. Hence a rotating selection of fresh pastas (mafaldine, rigatoni, ricotta cavatelli) and sauces (lamb ragù, Bolognese, pumpkin-seed pesto), and a recent weekly dinner special featuring pork meatballs in spicy marinara over creamy polenta, with a pickled vegetable, Kalamata olive, and feta salad.

On the other hand, Kalachnikoff told me, "we have a certain respect for pizza. Just because we have a wood-burning oven doesn't mean we're going to make pizza." In aiming for what Howell describes as "the flavor-to-value ratio" of beloved and inexpensive New York establishments such as the tiny Lower East Side Henan restaurant Spicy Village—almost nothing at Rolo's is over twenty dollars—they've landed on "a lot of our personal favorite comfort foods," he said. Paul Wetzel, a partner and a smoked-meats aficionado, is responsible for the hot dogs and Wagyu pastrami, plus the smoked turkey and ham used in sandwiches made with ciabatta baked by Kelly Mencin, also a Gramercy alum.

The turkey is paired with pickled celery, blue cheese, and "fancy sauce" (ketchup, mayo, mustard, Tabasco, minced dill pickle, black pepper), the ham with sharp Cheddar and Dijonnaise. For a vegan sandwich, thinly sliced fried tofu is layered with a spicy makrut-lime peanut sauce, grilled cabbage, and cucumber—an adaptation of *pecel*, an Indonesian salad that Rafiq Salim, another partner, grew up eating. Salim's childhood (he was born in the Netherlands) was also inspiration for one of Mencin's excellent pastries: a hyper-regional Dutch cinnamon roll called a Zeeuwse bolus, made from a soft yeasted dough that's twisted into ropes and coiled.

Rolo's, which is open for takeout and delivery and will expand to outdoor dining in the spring, is more than seven years in the making. In 2013, shortly after selling his textile company to Herman Miller, Stephen Maharam, a Gramercy Tavern regular and Rolo's fifth partner, encouraged Kalachnikoff to go out on his own. When the pandemic began, they were just months away from opening. But what seemed like uncannily bad timing has proved something of a gift. Divorced from the intense pressure of opening a full-service restaurant overnight, they've had the freedom to experiment, and to incorporate feedback from a fast-growing cast of regulars, Howell told me. "We got to understand what people, and what we, want out of a neighborhood place." *(Prepared foods $3.50–$22.)*

—Hannah Goldfield

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
A CLIMATE CHANGE

Nine years ago, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse had a sign made up that showed a photograph of the Earth as seen from space. "TIME TO WAKE UP," it urged, in large, unevenly spaced letters. Every week that the Senate was in session, Whitehouse, a Democrat from Rhode Island, would tote the sign to the chamber, set it on an easel, and, before a hundred chairs—most of them empty—deliver a speech. Though the details changed, the subject of the speech remained the same.

"It is time—indeed, it is well past time—for Congress to wake up to the disastrous effects of global climate change," Whitehouse said on May 16, 2013.

"My trusty 'TIME TO WAKE UP' sign is getting a little battered and showing some wear and tear, but I am still determined to get us to act on climate before it is too late," he said on November 29, 2016.

"I rise to call this chamber to wake up to the threat of climate change," he said on July 24, 2019.

Last week, Whitehouse hauled his beat-up sign to the chamber for the two-hundred-and-seventy-ninth time. He propped it up and announced that this speech would be the last in his long-running series. "A new dawn is breaking," he said. "And, when it's dawn, there's no need for my little candle against the darkness."

During the 2020 Presidential campaign, Joe Biden insisted that he took seriously the threat posed by global warming. Within hours of being sworn in, he had signed a slew of climate-change directives. One recommitted the United States to the Paris climate accord; another revoked the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. A third charged the Secretary of the Interior to restore the borders of two national monuments in Utah—Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante—which the Trump Administration had shrunk.

Last week, on the same day that Whitehouse literally dropped the mic, Biden signed a second, even more sweeping batch of executive orders. Among their many provisions, they directed the Interior Department to "pause" new oil and gas leases on federal land, and created the Civilian Climate Corps, a government jobs program intended to put people to work restoring public lands and waters. They also instructed federal agencies to purchase "zero-emissions" vehicles, called on the director of the Office of Management and Budget to identify and then eliminate federal fossil-fuel subsidies, and established a new White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy. "It's hard to imagine the week could have gone better," Mike Brune, the executive director of the Sierra Club, told *Rolling Stone*. "We're going from having the worst president in the history of our country with regards to protecting the environment to someone who has the most ambitious set of environmental proposals in our country's history."

Yet, as sharp as the contrast between Biden and his predecessor is, a week is only a week. In dealing with climate change, the United States is by now thirty years—and billions of tons of carbon dioxide—behind schedule. Warming is already wreaking havoc in many parts of the country—look at California's gruesome wildfire season—and the effects are pretty much guaranteed to get worse in the decade ahead. Last year was tied for the warmest on record, an extreme that was particularly notable because the weather pattern known as La Niña prevailed in the Pacific, and this usually brings cooler temperatures. (The six warmest years on record have all occurred since 2014.) A study published last week, in the journal *The Cryosphere*, reported that global ice loss, mostly from the Arctic and the Antarctic, has reached 1.2 trillion metric tons a year, and another recent paper, in *Science Advances*, warned that the rise in sea levels from melting glaciers in Greenland may be seriously underestimated.

Meanwhile, the pandemic, which has brought down carbon emissions,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOÃO FAZENDA

has also illustrated how tough it is to make significant cuts. With much of the world under lockdown, global emissions were around six per cent lower in 2020 than they were in 2019. Though this drop was the largest on record, it was still not enough to put the world on track to meet the 1.5-degree-Celsius goal set out in the Paris accord.

Whether the Biden Administration can make a meaningful difference in the climate's future remains very much to be seen. As the Washington *Post* reported recently, before the ink was dry on the President's orders "the gas, oil and coal industries were already mobilizing on all fronts." With the conservative majority on the Supreme Court, the Administration will have to be exceedingly careful in crafting new climate rules; otherwise, it could watch the Court sweep away the very basis of such rules. (The Court could revisit a key 5–4 decision, Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency, which requires the agency to regulate greenhouse gases; Chief Justice John Roberts dissented in that ruling.) There is, unfortunately, no substitute for strong environmental legislation, and Congress hasn't approved a major environmental bill since 1990. With the slimmest of possible margins in the Senate, Democrats may have trouble getting even a modest climate-change package passed. "The paper-thin majority likely puts sweeping global warming legislation beyond reach," a recent analysis by Reuters noted.

Still, a critical threshold has been crossed. For decades, politicians in Washington have avoided not just acting on but talking about warming. "Years went by in which you could scarcely get a Democratic Administration to put the words 'climate' and 'change' into the same paragraph," Whitehouse observed, before retiring his sign. "We quavered about polling showing climate as issue eight, or issue ten, ignoring that we had a say on that outcome. When we wouldn't even use the phrase, let alone make the case, no wonder the public didn't see climate change as a priority." Credit for changing the conversation—for making sure that there *is* a conversation—goes to stalwarts such as Whitehouse, and to a new generation of climate activists, and to the voters who watched California burn and southwestern Louisiana flood, and then flood again, and pushed climate change up the agenda. In a recent Morning Consult/Politico survey, "addressing climate change" ranked just behind "stimulating economic recovery from COVID-19" and "health care reform" as a priority.

Talking isn't going to solve the problem, but it's a start. "We've already waited too long to deal with this climate crisis," Biden said last week. "It's time to act."

—Elizabeth Kolbert

DEPT. OF AGITPROP

KEEPING COUNT

At noon on the bright, frigid day before the Biden-Harris Inauguration, a small, masked group assembled outside Playwrights Horizons, the Off Broadway theatre on West Forty-second Street, for the unveiling of an art work with overtones of resistance. The piece, by the street and subway artist Jilly Ballistic, is the first in the theatre's new public-art series. On the sidewalk, Ballistic, in a trenchcoat, with her hair in an elegantly sculpted Mohawk, stood near Adam Greenfield, the theatre's artistic director, who wore a retro parka. "This is the first time we're meeting!" Greenfield said, smiling. He created the series with his associate artistic director, Natasha Sinha; the costume and set designer David Zinn; and the artist Avram Finkelstein, a co-founder of the Silence = Death project, in the early AIDS-activism era. Next door, a bistro, Chez Josephine, played Billie Holiday's "I Wished on the Moon" to passersby.

Two Playwrights Horizons employees approached the theatre's plate-glass windows and peeled off brown paper, uncovering a sign that said, in huge letters, "With great power comes no accountability." Next, they uncovered a wide vitrine displaying a dollar-bill replica the size of a billboard, with a speech balloon graffitied beside George Washington's face. "Imagine 352,464 of these," it said. "Now imagine they're bodies."

Ballistic, whose work in subways incorporates graffiti and custom-made M.T.A. service posters, had written the number, the U.S. COVID death toll, on January 5th. She came up with the accountability slogan before the pandemic. "I never would have imagined this," she said. The workers opened the vitrine, and Ballistic, Sharpie in hand, paused, like a gymnast gathering focus. She drew a line through "352,464" and wrote, beside it, "399,053."

Two masked construction workers in hard hats, carrying bags from Sticky's Finger Joint, walked up. "Bro, I'm going to stand there, and you're going to take a picture of me, O.K.?" one said to the other, and posed. His name was Eric Ashford. ("Like Ashford & Simpson," he said, referring to the R. & B. duo.) He looked at the dollar bill. "I think it's wonderful," he said. "There's a lot of things going on in the world right now, and anything that gives some type of explanation, or invokes thought . . ." He trailed off. "This will invoke thought." He'd been affected by COVID. "I know people who have passed away—classmates, people I went to school with," he said. "This whole thing is like an actual real movie that we live in. You just got to keep pushing forward."

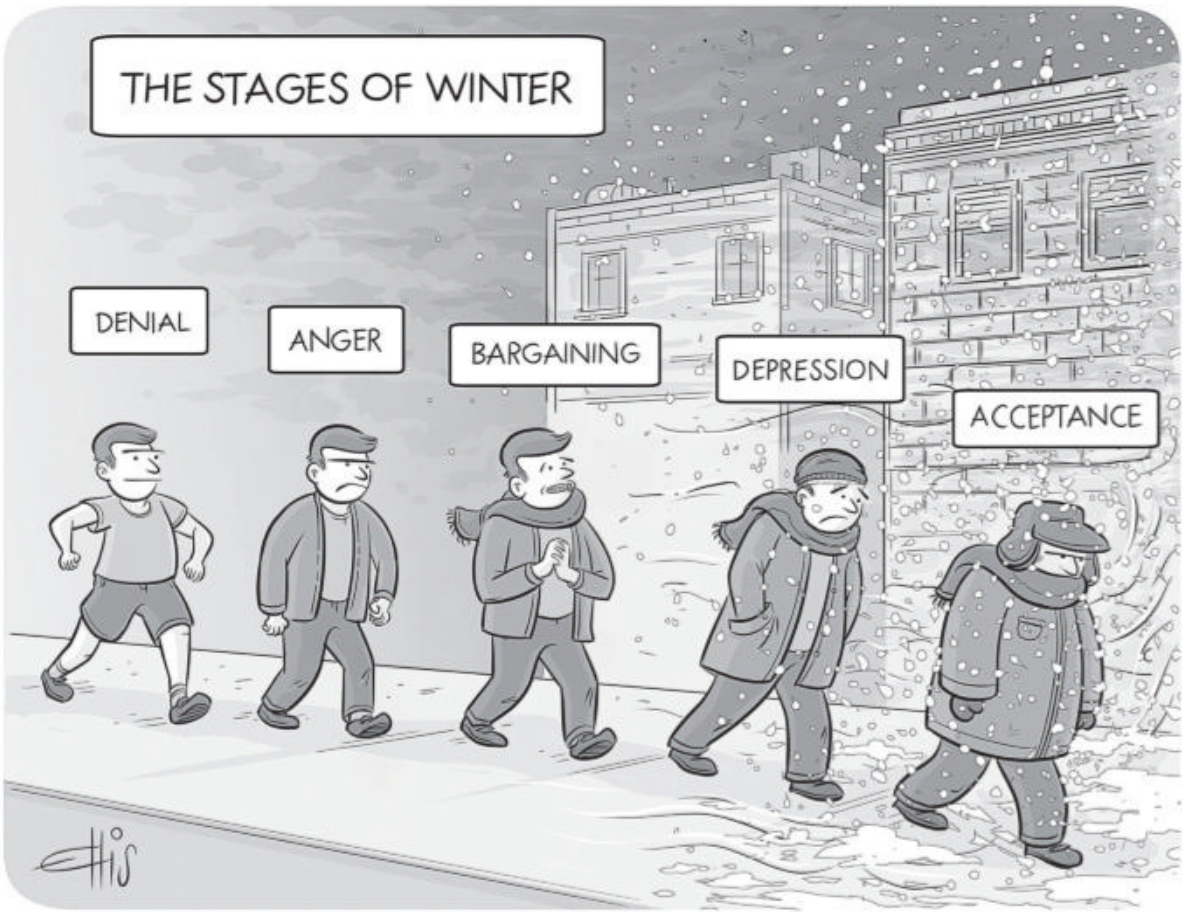
When Greenfield was offered the job at Playwrights Horizons, in 2019, he had already "spent a bunch of time worrying and complaining and banging fists on tables about the state of theatre," he said, a few days before the unveiling, on a Zoom call with Finkelstein. "I rented a place in Barcelona for six days, and I brought a few books." One of them was Jane Jacobs. "How do we engage with the city better?" he asked. "If we believe in new writing, which is what Playwrights Horizons is for, then to what end?" Then the pandemic happened, and Finkelstein called. He and Zinn had been thinking about "what to do with these muted public façades all over New York," Finkelstein said, and had immediately thought of Playwrights Horizons: "When Adam started saying things like 'What is theatre for?,' I knew it was right."

Finkelstein went on, "I am the elder statesman of agitprop. In the early days

of AIDS, I realized that the strategies the activists during the antiwar movement were using, to use the streets as a way to communicate, could work in terms of the AIDS pandemic." Street art needed to work on two levels, he said. "The 'Silence = Death' and the pink triangle are quite bold—you need to be able to read it from a moving vehicle. But then the text"—visible up close—"is meant to stimulate, to disrupt." This public-art series would do the same.

On the sidewalk, a masked New Yorker named Dean Manchand, in a knit hat that said "American Pool," stared at the dollar bill. "Is the artist here?" he asked. Ballistic waved. "Thank you," Manchand said. COVID had dominated Manchand's recent weeks: his parents had had it and recovered; his uncle had just died; his aunt was in the hospital. "Up to this point, I was, like, you know, Donald Trump is a clown," Manchand said. "But because of him it's hit my family, too. And seeing this today, my first good day to actually return back to work, was, like, wow." He held up his phone, showing a photo of his uncle and aunt, smiling on a ski slope in animal-print jumpsuits. "That's Leopard Man and Zebra Gypsy," he said. "They should be in Utah right now, skiing. They're legends out in Utah." He was on his way to the hospital, with a mortuary-release form for his aunt to sign. Last Friday, Ballistic crossed out "399,053" and wrote "427,626."

—Sarah Larson



LEGACIES
WRECKING BALL

On February 17th, the Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino, in Atlantic City, is to be demolished by implosion. Shuttered since 2014, the thirty-seven-year-old building has already been stripped of most of its concrete façade, falling chunks of which began crashing onto the boardwalk last year. Never an architectural treasure, it now resembles the shaky remainders of a truck bombing. Donald Trump hasn't even owned it since 2009, and in 2016 his residual ties were severed in bankruptcy court. Yet a moot question must be raised: Might this building have merited preservation as a site for future generations to contemplate the forces and passions that shaped the forty-fifth President? If Abraham Lincoln or Theodore Roosevelt—or even Grover Cleveland—had owned a casino, wouldn't it be cool if it were still standing and you could play a few slots?

Trump properties provide a lot of fodder for people who worry about saving America's architectural heritage. His name is attached not to a log cabin or even a sprawling plantation but to dozens of hotels, apartment blocks, office buildings, and golf courses. But the focus of future Trump-related preservation battles is likely to be Trump Tower, arguably the most iconic, if loathed, piece of Presidential real estate since Monticello. Plenty of unloved modern buildings have excited preservationists' passions, including brutalist piles such as Paul Rudolph's Orange County Government Center and wacky one-offs like Edward Durell Stone's Lollipop Building, at 2 Columbus Circle—structures scorned by the public but cherished by small bands of knowing devotees.

Although the architect of Trump Tower, Der Scutt, worked for both Rudolph and Stone, the ex-President's bevelled, mirrored monolith, in midtown, provokes more of a *meh* from experts. "It's another glass tower," Laurie Beckelman, a former chair of the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission, said. "It's just real estate." She suggested that, rather than landmark it, the city might install a discreet plaque: "What the hell. You say, 'Here's where he lived.'"

Trump Tower opened in 1983, as one can tell by looking at it. "With its glass and brass, it is an example of the styles and materials of its time, sort of like shoulder pads," Daria Pizzetta, a principal architect at the firm H3, which has renovated many historic buildings, including some at Lincoln Center, said. "But will it be considered beautiful or significant in fifty years? *No*."

Sarah M. Whiting, the dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Design, had a different perspective. Trump Tower should endure, she said, "as a reminder that we all knew what we were in for."

A genuinely positive assessment came from Robert A. M. Stern, the architect and historian who dipped a toe in related waters when his firm designed the George W. Bush Presidential Center, in Dallas. "No doubt I'll get a thousand attacks," he said, and went on to argue that Trump Tower—a "handsome" building—deserves landmark status on both

aesthetic and historic grounds. "I'd hate to see it go," he said, adding that, whatever one thinks of Trump's Administration, "he didn't build this building *as* President. He didn't try to foist it on anyone as a solution to immigration."

But what of the former President's birthplace, in Jamaica Estates, Queens? Richard Nixon's and Bill Clinton's childhood homes have been preserved and landmarked—so why not Trump's? Since his election, the five-bedroom Tudor house has been sold twice, to speculators, most recently for $2.1 million (roughly double the value of comparable houses nearby). It was briefly listed on Airbnb for seven hundred and twenty-five dollars a night; a sign directed pilgrims to the very bedroom where Trump was likely conceived. The current owner tried to auction it last fall, but bids (if any) failed to meet the reserve price. A GoFundMe has been set up to raise three million dollars to buy the house and give it back to Trump or to a charity of his choosing. As of Trump's last full day in office, only $6,728 had been pledged.

When Donald was four, the Trump family moved around the corner to a Colonial with more elbow room, where he lived until he was shipped off to military school. In 2018, the landmarks commission received a formal "request for evaluation" of the house. Its verdict: thumbs down. According to the commission's director of communications, Zodet Negrón, the organization prioritizes "properties in which a public figure lived at the time he or she made a significant and noteworthy contribution to culture, society, or politics." Young Donald's gluing his brother Robert's blocks together doesn't count, even though he bragged about it in "The Art of the Deal."

Back in Atlantic City, officials overseeing the Trump Plaza demolition had planned to raise money for the local Boys & Girls Club by auctioning off the right to press a button that would initiate the implosion. Bidding had reached a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars ($168,272 more than was raised for Trump's birthplace). The auction was called off after the owner of the property, a company controlled by the billionaire Trump supporter Carl Icahn, objected—allegedly on safety grounds—while offering to make good on the lost charity money. Where this President is concerned, the countervailing forces of preservation and contempt remain to be balanced.

—Bruce Handy

KIDS TODAY DEPT.
BEAUTIFUL *SOUP*

Kim Hastreiter, a co-founder of *Paper* magazine and a mother hen and mentor to generations of downtown art kids, has thrown tons of parties over the years: there was the birthday in Harlem, where she learned to play cymbals (twelve red velvet cakes, food cooked by her friend Marcus Samuelsson); there was the neighborhood party at the Odeon just after 9/11 (French fries, chocolate pudding, poetry, champagne). But the best parties are the ones that she hosts at her apartment, in Greenwich Village. And the best of these are soup parties.

The last soup party was a year ago, in February, a mere incubation period before the end of parties for a while. Five soups, forty friends, two hundred paper bowls. Danny Bowien, the chef at Mission Chinese, made vegan congee. The cookbook writer David Tanis made posole. There was a minestrone and a red-lentil-and-bulgur. Hastreiter made her mother's mushroom soup. Debi Mazar and John Waters were there, as were the jewelry designer Ted Muehling, Hastreiter's "really tall friend, Ford," Tauba Auerbach, Chloe Wise, and a bunch of the twenty-something artists she knows.

Kim Hastreiter

Then came the lockdown. Hastreiter, who is sixty-nine and lives alone, stayed in her apartment through March, April, May. The kids checked in and dropped off groceries, but she was miserable. She had a book project to work on, but couldn't bring herself to write. She made soup, but didn't enjoy it. "All I did was feel horrible and beat myself up every day because all I'm doing is I'm making soup every day," she said, over Zoom. In the background: Heath crockery, wooden spoons. "You're locked in, locked down, and you can't even write your books—what's wrong with you? And then I realized, my epiphany was, it's because you don't even know where we are. We don't know what we're starting from. Nothing made sense anymore."

She began calling friends. "Everyone was, like, mental, right?" she said. "All my friends are experiencing this and going through trauma and acting weird, being super depressed, crying, or super hyper, or super crazy, or withdrawing." What everyone really needed was a place where they could brainstorm, exchange ideas, noodle on the specific strangeness of this time, right now. They needed a soup party. But how?

Hastreiter decided to make a newspaper, and call it *The New Now*. When the weather got warm, she set herself up on a bench in Washington Square Park. Her nephew made her a sign that read "Kim's Office: Art, Trouble, Ideas, Schmooze." Friends and colleagues came to see her, by appointment. The conversations on the park bench became content. She interviewed Michael Stipe, of R.E.M., about creative renewal and Time Remaining, and assigned James Murphy, from LCD Soundsystem, to write an essay about his COVID-era obsession with fishing. Caridad (La Bruja) De La Luz contributed a poem called "W.A.P." The designer Andre Walker wrote about magic mushrooms and finding God. There are typographers, photographers, an artist whose medium is bread.

"When I was young, I used to hate adults," Hastreiter said. "I was the first generation of the revolution people. Now the children, the kids, they love the adults.

I tell them stories of how I started *Paper* on a typewriter. They love my art collection because I'm an O.G. They love O.G.s." Hanging out with young people is one of the things she misses the most. *The New Now* is a remedy. The youngest contributor is five years old; the eldest, eighty-seven. They're all New Yorkers. "This is just one of my dinner parties," she said. "It's a soup. It has all the spices." Also, soup recipes.

The New Now, which takes the form of a twenty-seven-by-seventeen-inch broadside, is being distributed—free, analog only, no ads—to six thousand New Yorkers and out-of-state people who are New Yorkers at heart. Next, she wants to make a *New Now* covering the whole country—then the world. To celebrate the release, Hastreiter planned a party where the conceptual artist Jill Magid would hand out special pennies engraved with the phrase "The body was already so fragile." Magid made a hundred and twenty thousand of the coins, to represent the value of the stimulus checks distributed last spring. Hastreiter hoped that her guests would make rubbings on copies of *The New Now*, and then spend their pennies in bodegas in the five boroughs.

—Dana Goodyear

HYPHENATE
LIGHTS ON THE CORNER

Two of David Duchovny's biggest pet peeves, in coverage of his work as an actor and a novelist, are bad puns referencing "The X-Files" and any suggestion that his fancy education—Princeton (undergrad) and Yale (M.A. in English lit)—accounts for his aptitude as a writer. Duchovny finds both defaults lame. The emphasis on alma maters is a corollary of the kind of thinking that prompts people to say, on hearing that an actor has published a novel, "Who does he think he is?"

"Who does anyone think they are?" Duchovny asked the other night, in his familiar gentle deadpan. "You have to have an ego to think you have the right to publish anything. It's a fine question

David Duchovny

to ask: Who the fuck do you think you are?" He was in the midst of revealing a little bit about who he is, or thinks he is, by way of a sentimental meander through the East Village, the neighborhood of his youth. He'd just gone to see his mother, who is ninety-one, in her apartment on Ninth Street: a rare visit, in this COVID year. He'd brought her a copy of his new novel, "Truly Like Lightning," out this month. It is his fourth, all of them published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Does she read them?

"No. She just feels the weight of them."

He had on white Adidas Superstars, skinny gray jeans, a black down jacket, and a blue N95 over a salt-and-pepper beard. He's sixty—trim of build, sly of manner, youthful of spirit. He'd been living during the pandemic on the Upper West Side with his son, a senior in high school. He got COVID in October.

He drew up to his childhood apartment building, on Eleventh Street and Second Ave., across from St. Mark's Church. "My mom at this time every night thinks she has to get back to this apartment," he said. "She doesn't think she's in the right apartment." His mother, Meg, is a Scottish Lutheran, a former schoolteacher; his father, Ami, was a publicist and writer who published his first novel at the age of seventy-three, a year before he died. (Duchovny's grandfather Moshe, who'd fled Stalin's purges, was a Yiddish-language newspaperman in Brooklyn.)

"See the lights on the corner there? On the third floor? Two windows down. That was my bedroom, and this was my view." He gestured toward the churchyard. "It's a weird view. It's a graveyard. We used to play baseball there. The headstones were flat, and we used them as bases." Just then, the bells began to chime. "Wow," he said. "I'm gonna dissolve."

Earlier, he'd passed by Grace Church School, another alma mater (high school was uptown, at Collegiate), where he and his now ex-wife, Téa Leoni, were married—in the courtyard. "She was a divorcée, I was half Jewish, so I got the garden. Didn't matter that I'd gone there or that my mother had taught there for thirty years. The law's the law."

Religious law was top of mind, perhaps. "Truly Like Lightning" tells the story of an ex-stuntman who converts to his own heretical interpretation of Mormonism, to inherit a chunk of California desert, where he lives off the grid with his wives. A real-estate investor, on a Joshua Tree peyote retreat, stumbles into their compound, and trouble and mirth ensue.

"I had a thread of a story I wanted to tell based on some Mormon precepts," Duchovny said, "and I only knew them because I wrote an 'X-File' in, like, 2000, where I made a fictional character out of a Mormon forger named Mark Hofmann, who—it's an amazing story." Hofmann composed fake and damning "lost letters" in the hand of Joseph Smith, to con the Church into paying to suppress them.

"I don't like research at all," he said. "I'm really lazy that way. But if I have an idea I farm it out. I find a graduate student somewhere and give them parameters." He went on, "I wrote this one when I was rebuilding my house in Malibu and was living in a train car on my property. It's a tiny little space, like a little box. I get up at four to write. I like when it's dark out. I like feeling like I'm getting a jump on people."

He passed the asphalt expanse of Peter's Field, the home park of his youth, on Twentieth Street, and then headed east to Peter Cooper Village, whose leafy confines he'd aspired to as a boy. He stopped at another lot. "I spent a lot of time in this basketball court," he said. "I remember the worst thing I ever saw on the court was a guy spit in another guy's face. I recall it with a shudder. What are the origins of that gesture? It's just about the worst thing you can do to a person." He paused. "Unless they want it." He grinned. "I don't judge."

—Nick Paumgarten

LETTER FROM MOSCOW

FIVE-MONTH PLAN

When the pandemic struck, Russia set out to beat the West to a vaccine.

BY JOSHUA YAFFA

One morning last August, Vladimir Putin, isolated at his Presidential residence in the forest outside Moscow, held a videoconference with his Cabinet. The ministers' faces, stern yet deferential, populated a large screen in front of Putin's desk—the Kremlin's version of a pandemic Zoom call. The proceedings were broadcast on state television, and had the wooden quality of reality TV. The meeting's ostensible agenda was the government's preparations for the school year ahead, but the real news came in Putin's opening remarks, when he revealed that Russia had granted approval to Sputnik V, the country's first vaccine against COVID-19. The vaccine, Putin noted, is "quite effective, helps develop immunity, and has gone through all the necessary trials."

In fact, Russian scientists hadn't published any data from their Phase I and Phase II trials, which test a vaccine's safety and potential for efficacy among a limited number of volunteers, and hadn't even started Phase III, which tests the vaccine in a much larger group of volunteers, using a placebo as a control. Still, Sputnik V had already begun to make its way through Russian society. In the Cabinet meeting, Putin mentioned that one of his daughters had been vaccinated. She'd had a slight fever afterward, he reported, but it had passed in a day or two. "She's feeling well," he said. An influential cultural figure who received the vaccine in August told me that he had "heard about it from people who pay attention and are careful." He went on, "It felt a bit adventurous, but, the way the pandemic was going, I thought I'd give it a try."

The vaccine's name was the brainchild of Kirill Dmitriev, the director of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (R.D.I.F.), the sovereign wealth fund that is the vaccine's chief lobbyist and financial backer. In speaking about Sputnik V, Dmitriev did not shy away from the history of superpower rivalry that the name evoked. (The "V" stands for "vaccine.") As he told CNN in late July, referring to the world's first satellite, launched by the U.S.S.R. in 1957, "Americans were surprised when they heard Sputnik's beeping. It's the same with this vaccine. Russia will have got there first." Russian officials, including Mikhail Murashko, the country's health minister, called Sputnik V "the first vaccine against the novel coronavirus infection." A news anchor on Rossiya-1 proclaimed, "Just like sixty-plus years ago, headlines around the world again feature the Russian word 'Sputnik.'" The Russian vaccine represented, the anchor said, a "turning point in the fight against the pandemic." Putin praised the scientists responsible: "We owe our gratitude to those who have taken this first, very important step for Russia and the entire world."

Sputnik V was developed at the Gamaleya Institute, in Moscow. Before the pandemic, the institute did not have a particularly high profile. Gamaleya scientists had produced vaccines for Ebola and MERS (the respiratory illness, similar to COVID-19, that emerged in Saudi Arabia in 2012), but neither had been widely employed or authorized for use outside Russia. With little public data about Sputnik V, the question arose: Was it a scientific breakthrough or the dubious result of a rushed process?

In the past, it has taken years, even decades, to bring new vaccines to market. Attenuated vaccines, such as those for measles, mumps, and rubella, involve weakening a virus to non-dangerous strength; inactivated vaccines, as in most flu shots, render it inert. Developing such vaccines is a tricky process of trial

"Everyone wants to be first," the virologist Konstantin Chumakov said.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAIN NOGUES / SYGMA / GETTY (BUILDINGS); GETTY (OTHER)

ILLUSTRATION BY CRISTIANA COUCEIRO

and error. Research into mRNA vaccines—which, in contrast to traditional vaccines, are synthetic, carrying a portion of a virus's genetic code—began in the nineteen-nineties. Though the mRNA technology was unproved until last year, it was also tantalizingly simple, akin to programming a script of computer software. Moderna, a pharmaceutical company founded in 2010 with a focus on mRNA, created its vaccine prototype during a weekend in January, 2020. In mid-March, the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, working with the German company BioNTech, came up with twenty contenders for a vaccine; by early April, they had been whittled down to four.

Sputnik V—like several other COVID-19 vaccines, developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, in the United Kingdom; CanSino Biologics, in China; and Johnson & Johnson, in the United States—is what is known as a vector vaccine. This type of vaccine is much newer than the attenuated or inactivated kind but has a longer track record than the mRNA variety. In the nineties, scientists began exploring the use of disabled viruses as "vectors," or carriers for implanting genetic material into human cells. Early experiments focussed on therapies for hemophilia and cystic fibrosis, among other genetic diseases. Soon, pharmaceutical companies and scientific centers around the world began looking into the potential application of the technology for vaccines. As Konstantin Chumakov, a Russian-American virologist who is an adviser to the World Health Organization and a member of the Global Virus Network, an international coalition that tracks viral pathogens, explained, the vector is "a Trojan horse to go in and deliver whatever you want."

At the time of Sputnik V's approval, Moderna and Pfizer were months away from announcing the results of their Phase III trials or filing for F.D.A. authorization to begin wide-scale vaccination programs. Scientific experts expressed concern at the speed with which the Russian vaccine had been registered for public use. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told an ABC News correspondent, "I hope that the Russians have actually definitively proven that the vaccine is safe and effective. I seriously doubt that they've done that."

Scientists around the world were speaking of a spirit of unprecedented collaboration, but an undercurrent of international competition was hard to ignore. As Putin crowed about Sputnik V, President Trump promised an American vaccine as early as the fall. China's position as a credible global power appeared to hinge on its role in helping the world emerge from a pandemic that began inside its borders. Meanwhile, the U.K. and the European Union, awaiting a final Brexit agreement, pursued divergent vaccination strategies. "Sadly, vaccine development was politicized everywhere, not only in Russia," Chumakov told me. "Everyone wants to be first."

The Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology started out as a privately held facility, in the nineteenth century, and, after the Bolshevik Revolution, was taken over by the state. It is named for Nikolay Gamaleya, a physician who apprenticed under Louis Pasteur and led the newly formed Soviet government's campaign to inoculate citizens against smallpox. From the street, the institute looks like any other administrative facility in Moscow, with a brick wall ringing the perimeter and an unmarked steel door, beyond which lie several unassuming two- and three-story buildings. A row of memorial plaques for renowned Russian scientists on the façade of the main building offers the only clue as to what happens inside.

When I visited one afternoon in December, I found a world that I had almost stopped being able to picture. People strolled from one office to another, pausing to chat; almost no one wore a mask. In the spring, just as the pandemic was making landfall in Russia, researchers had come up with their prototype vaccine and started administering it to themselves; by the time I made it to the institute, most of its twelve hundred employees had been vaccinated.

The head of the team that developed Sputnik V is Denis Logunov, a forty-two-year-old microbiologist with a fuzzy beard, the shoulders of a defensive lineman, and the demeanor of a researcher who would prefer to busy himself with experiments rather than to boast of the results. He and I walked across the snow-mottled campus of the institute to his laboratory, where he had overseen the development of the vaccines for Ebola and MERS, in addition to Sputnik V. There, we put on lab coats and disposable plastic covers for our shoes. A sign on the door read "Caution! Biological Hazard!"

In 2014, after the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, Logunov and other Gamaleya scientists had set out to create a vector vaccine using a modified form of the human adenovirus, which causes the common cold. That year, Chumakov, the virologist from the Global Virus Network, visited Logunov and his team, and was impressed. "I have no questions about their professional qualities and abilities," he told me. "They are certainly not worse than any of the many other people involved in vaccine development." In the summer of 2017, the Gamaleya scientists sent two thousand doses of the vaccine to Guinea for a Phase III trial. By then, the country's epidemic had largely petered out, so it wasn't possible to gauge its efficacy in a clinical setting as planned. All the same, Putin claimed that the Gamaleya vaccine had "proved to be the most effective in the world." (It was approved in Russia, but it has yet to be licensed by an international regulatory body. An Ebola vaccine developed by Merck was approved by the W.H.O. in 2019, and one by Johnson & Johnson won the European Commission's market authorization last July.) In 2018, Gamaleya developed a vaccine for MERS, but that outbreak also subsided, and the vaccine prototype did not reach a Phase III trial or feature in scientific journals abroad. As Ilya Yasny, the head of scientific research at Inbio Ventures, an investment fund in Moscow, put it, describing the two earlier would-be successes of the institute's scientists, "We have to take them at their word."

I spoke with Alexander Gintsburg, who has been the director of the Gamaleya Institute since 1997, in his wood-panelled office on campus, and he, too, cited the success of the Ebola and MERS vaccines. Gintsburg is sixty-nine years old, with wire-framed glasses and an almost cherubic smile, and he exudes a grandfatherly pride in the work carried out at the institute. The Ebola vaccine, he said, had been more than ninety per cent effective. When I asked him how

he could be sure, he replied that the effectiveness of any vaccine could be assessed not only by collecting epidemiological data but also by looking for antibodies. This is not always the case: several prototype vaccines, including one for H.I.V., have produced antibodies without protecting against infection.

Logunov recalled reading about the new virus in China at the end of 2019, but it wasn't until mid-February, 2020, when he took part in a two-day W.H.O. forum in Geneva on COVID-19, that he understood the scale of the crisis. "That's when I knew the world wasn't going to cope," he said. The Gamaleya scientists' familiarity with adenovirus vectors allowed them to move quickly. Logunov, who worked with some sixty researchers at Gamaleya on the COVID-19 vaccine, told me, "We didn't face the question of which approach to use." Discussing the strengths of the adenovirus platform, he said, "I would compare it to a rocket. This launch vehicle can deliver satellites, equipment, people—it carries whatever cargo you give it." Logunov rejected the suggestion that his team's vector-based method was particularly pioneering, positioning his own laboratory and Sputnik V as part of the global scientific mainstream. "This is not a story of some great breakthrough but, rather, of reaching for a quick solution while a pandemic unfolds," he said.

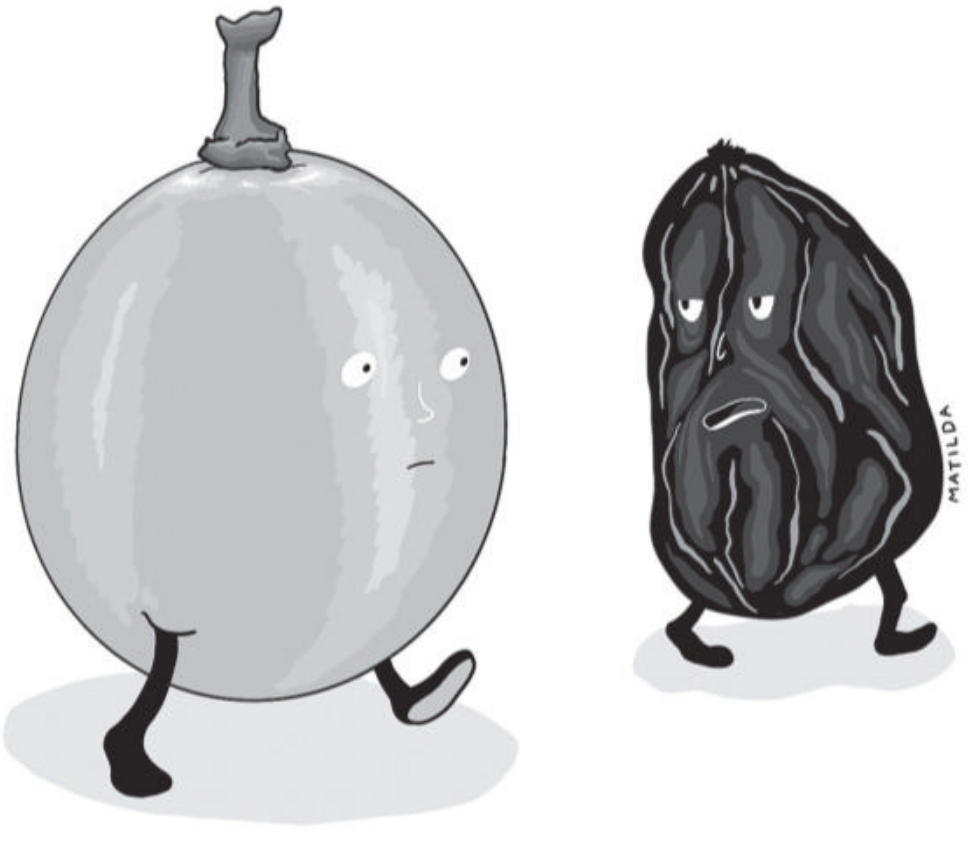
At Gamaleya, I also paid a visit to the laboratory of Vladimir Gushchin, who oversaw the sequencing of the virus's genetic code. Chinese scientists had published the SARS-CoV-2 genome sequence last January, but the Gamaleya researchers needed their own live viral strain in order to create an infectious model of the pathogen for their experiments. Gushchin described how, for several days in March, he and others from his lab had searched for a usable sample of the virus, rushing back and forth between Gamaleya and a hospital in Kommunarka, on the outskirts of Moscow, which had been designated early on to treat COVID-19 patients—mostly travellers who had contracted the virus in Europe. The strain they eventually used to test Sputnik V came from a Russian citizen who was known to have been in Rome on March 15th. He was already sick when he landed at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, and was swiftly taken to Kommunarka for treatment. Gushchin and his team picked up the patient's swab on March 17th.

When I walked through Gushchin's lab, he showed me the genetic sequencer that had been used to map the original sample, a plastic box not much larger than a laser printer. "We understood that this was very valuable material," Gushchin told me, "but also that there was so much we didn't know—how to cultivate the virus, what its life span might be, how likely you are to be infected while working with it."

The main complication in using an adenovirus vector is the possibility that the patient might already have—or might develop, after the first of two consecutive inoculations—immunity to the vector. If a person's body recognizes the vector as a foreign object that needs to be destroyed, it will reject the genetic cargo as well, rendering the vaccine less effective. Manufacturers have found ways around these issues in their COVID-19 vaccines. Johnson & Johnson uses adenovirus-26, a rare variant of cold virus to which most recipients would be unlikely to mount a robust immune response. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine uses an adenovirus strain that infects chimpanzees, and to which humans presumably do not have preëxisting immunity.

The researchers at Gamaleya decided to use two separate vectors, as they had done with their Ebola and MERS vaccines. In the first dose, the vector would be adenovirus-26; for the second shot, which is meant to help induce long-lasting immunity by activating T cells, they chose adenovirus-5, a more common strain. Jerome Kim, the director of the International Vaccine Institute, told me that the two-vector approach, known to scientists as "heterologous prime boosting," is grounded in sound theory. "It's a way to confuse the immune system so that it focusses on the COVID-19 protein," he said. But, he added, "we need to see the data before we can say whether this particular vaccine is ready for prime time." Chumakov expressed similar reservations, saying that, until the long-term efficacy of the various vectors has been proved, the arguments for and against each approach remain "entirely theoretical, and thus equally valid or bogus."

In assembling the vaccine, Gamaleya's scientists used an enzyme to stitch together the vectors' DNA and the gene that codes for the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2. In less than two weeks, and even before Moscow went into lockdown, a prototype vaccine was ready. Logunov showed me his laboratory's vivarium, a small room with dozens of plastic cages of live mice stacked nearly to the ceiling. In March, researchers vaccinated mice and analyzed their blood for an immune response. Next came hamsters and guinea pigs, followed by macaques and marmosets. All produced high lev-



"Enjoy that body while you can. It ain't gonna last."

els of antibodies, and the vaccinated animals did not become ill.

In April, Logunov and a number of his colleagues in the lab administered the vaccine to themselves. "When you are a researcher, you are effectively going into the red zone," he said. "You simply need to protect yourself." He went on, "It was also thrilling to have the chance to test your technology, to see how it performs in battle." When I spoke to Gintsburg, he told me that he had given the vaccine not only to himself and to many of his employees but also to his wife, his daughter, and his granddaughter. I asked whether he felt that he was taking a gamble. "Without excitement, it's impossible to work, to create," he said. "As a scientist, you should always have the desire to learn, to find things out."

"Honey, come look at the lasagna I built."

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On April 20th, in a videoconference, Putin told his Cabinet that he would "like to hear about progress on a vaccine against the virus," taking care to note "the colossal responsibility for the outcome that its developers must shoulder." Gintsburg was among the scientists on the call, and he informed Putin of the vaccine created at Gamaleya, which had undergone the first round of animal testing, producing the antibodies necessary to "defend against rather high doses of COVID-19." Putin was impressed. "What you've told me is very important, and very interesting," he said.

Dmitriev, the head of the R.D.I.F., the sovereign wealth fund that backs Sputnik V, told me that he and his colleagues had studied as many as twenty potential vaccines from various Russian research organizations, including a number of high-profile state laboratories. "Why did we choose the vaccine from Gamaleya Institute?" he asked. "The safest vaccine, and one that has been researched for decades, is the human adenovirus vaccine." In fact, although viral vectors have been the subject of countless studies and scientific papers, only one adenovirus-based vaccine, the first shot of Johnson & Johnson's Ebola regimen, had seen wide public use before Russia approved Sputnik V.

Last fall, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine ran into a number of difficulties in its testing and rollout. Researchers suspended Phase III trials after a U.K. participant became ill, but failed to properly notify the F.D.A.; as a result, the American trial was postponed for six and a half weeks. In October, the *Times* of London published a report outlining a Russian disinformation campaign that was "designed to undermine and spread fear about the Oxford University coronavirus vaccine." The report linked comments made by Dmitriev, in which he referred to it as a "monkey vaccine," to a segment on Russian television that suggested that the vaccine could turn humans into apes. The U.K.'s foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, publicly complained about Dmitriev's choice of language; Dmitriev has since avoided using the phrase. When I spoke to him in December, he dismissed the notion that he had been motivated by geopolitical competition. "We don't aspire to be the primary vaccine in the world but, rather, part of a portfolio of vaccines," he said. Still, he couldn't resist a dig at his competitors. "There are generally no long-term studies of either mRNA vaccines or chimpanzee ones," he said.

Dmitriev is a well-connected banker. In the nineties, he studied at Stanford and Harvard, and he worked at McKinsey and Goldman Sachs before building a career as a financier in Russia. His wife, Natalia Popova, is the deputy director of Innopraktika, the scientific institute tied to a $1.5-billion project to build a technology hub at Moscow State University. The institute is led by Katerina Tikhonova, who is widely reported to be Putin's daughter; in the early two-thousands, Popova and Tikhonova attended the university together. (Most observers assumed that, when Putin referred to the daughter who was vaccinated, he meant Tikhonova.) In a segment that aired on a state television channel in August, Popova tours Logunov's laboratory at the Gamaleya Institute; she also interviews Dmitriev over video chat, without noting that they are married. "It's still unclear where the coronavirus came from, but Russia can be the place where it is defeated," she declares.

Speaking of his choice of name for the vaccine, Dmitriev said, "We simply had the idea of choosing a Russian word that the rest of the world already knows." Gintsburg acknowledged that the name was chosen "with competition in the international arena in mind." But, he added, "even if, for the general population, this has some meaning, it doesn't matter at all for the purposes of science."

Logunov insisted that it wasn't politics but the extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic that called for a departure from traditional procedures. "If we have something that is proved to be safe and that has the chance to save

"No need to bring them in—they're indoor-outdoor rocks."

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a person, it's unethical not to try and do so," he said. Others were less sure. Svetlana Zavidova, the head of a trade group that represents multinational pharmaceutical companies working in Russia, told me, "Like in a slalom race, you have to pass through certain gates along the way. We decided to just zoom straight downhill so as to save time. We cut past and then said, 'Now give us a medal.'" Yasny, the scientist from Inbio Ventures, said, "I have no complaints directed toward the employees of Gamaleya Institute but, rather, to politicians, bureaucrats, and the press. Everything could have been fine if there hadn't been all this hype and lack of transparency."

Judy Twigg, a global-public-health expert at Virginia Commonwealth University, agreed. "Russia didn't do itself any favors by registering Sputnik V before they had Phase III data," she said. Given the country's track record of manipulation and obfuscation, any Russian vaccine was destined to face heightened skepticism. In recent years, Russia has been accused, credibly, of doping its Olympic athletes and of poisoning enemies, such as the former spy Sergei Skripal and the opposition leader Alexei Navalny, with banned nerve agents. Dmitriev said that he wasn't fazed, or even all that surprised, by the mistrust the vaccine had been met with. "No matter what Russia does, it will be criticized, that's a given," he told me. In a segment that aired on "The Daily Show" in September, a narrator with an exaggerated Russian accent asked the audience, "Are you afraid COVID-19 will kill you before Putin has a chance to? Then try Mother Russia's new COVID-19 vaccine." He goes on, "It is guaranteed safe and effective. How do we know? Because it was tested on a bear—by a scientist who was also a bear."

In early September, Logunov and his colleagues published the results from Sputnik V's combined Phase I and II trials in *The Lancet*. There were only seventy-six participants—about the same number as in the equivalent trials by Pfizer, but fewer than in Moderna's, which had several hundred volunteers, or in Oxford-AstraZeneca's, which had more than a thousand. All the participants had produced large quantities of antibodies and infection-fighting T cells, and no one had become infected or developed serious side effects. The authors wrote that the vaccine was "safe, well tolerated, and induces strong humoral and cellular immune responses."

Three days later, an open letter, which has since been signed by almost forty scientists, mostly from prominent Western research centers, pointed out a number of supposed irregularities with the data. Most significant, the reported antibody levels of participants looked strangely similar. "On the ground of simple probabilistic evaluations the fact of observing so many data points preserved among different experiments is highly unlikely," the letter read. One of its signatories, a Russian-born molecular biologist at Northwestern University named Konstantin Andreev, told me, "We weren't saying whether the vaccine is good or bad, safe or unsafe. Our objection wasn't really to the vaccine per se but to how the researchers carried out their study. At minimum, it was sloppy; at most, it was manipulated." The signers of the letter requested the raw data from the trials so that they could draw their own conclusions.

Logunov and his co-authors replied in *The Lancet*, saying that any repetitive figures were the result of simple coincidence, the small number of participants, and lab instruments that distribute values into discrete clusters. They declined to provide the raw data. Logunov told me that to give such information to anyone who asked for it would be a distraction, and a violation of the norms and practices of modern pharmaceutical development. "There are seven billion people on earth, and it's impossible to present every data point to everyone," he said. "No one works this way."

The Gamaleya immunologists had some defenders in the West. Naor Bar-Zeev, a professor of international health and vaccine sciences at Johns Hopkins University, and one of the peer reviewers for the original *Lancet* paper, supported its publication and felt that it had been written "thoughtfully and carefully." He was persuaded by the Gamaleya scientists' explanations. If you set out to identify suspicious patterns, he said, you easily can. "They accused Gamaleya of selectively reporting certain results, but, by selectively highlighting supposed similarities in the data, they were essentially doing the same thing." In my conversations with scientific ex-

perts in Russia and in the West, few doubted the fundamental construction or even the likely efficacy of Sputnik V; their concerns were about politics and the process. "I don't see any reason to denigrate the quality of the work of the scientists," Twigg, the global-public-health expert, said. "But, given the system in which those scientists operate and how that system has behaved, it's not surprising or unwarranted that people reacted with suspicion."

By late August, Sputnik V's Phase III trial had begun, with the aim of vaccinating thirty thousand volunteers; another ten thousand would get a placebo. One morning this past fall, I went to one of the trial sites, City Polyclinic No. 2, on Moscow's southern outskirts. During the first wave of the pandemic, the clinic had housed a round-the-clock CT center to scan the lungs of infected patients. Several doctors and nurses contracted the virus, but all survived. I was met by Natalia Shindryaeva, the clinic's director. "We're living through history and, what's more, taking part in it," she said. We stepped into the exam room where the vaccine was being administered. A nurse opened up a giant freezer. There they were: hundreds of glass vials of Sputnik V, with a blue cap for the first injection and a red one for the second, to be administered twenty-one days later. A trial participant walked in and rolled up his sleeve. I asked him why he'd decided to take part. "I'm tired, and ready for this to be over," he answered, tugging at his surgical mask. I could empathize; in fact, I felt a pang of jealousy.

On November 9th, Pfizer announced that its interim Phase III data had shown its vaccine to be more than ninety per cent effective. Two days later, the Gamaleya Institute issued a press release saying that Sputnik V was ninety-two per cent effective. Then, on November 16th, Moderna said that its vaccine was almost ninety-five per cent effective. Another week passed, and the Gamaleya Institute updated its interim figures: actually, Sputnik V was ninety-five per cent effective, too. As Vasily Vlasov, a prominent epidemiologist and a professor at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, told me in December, "It looks like we couldn't allow for this version of Sputnik not to reach outer space."

Logunov seemed offended and confused when I suggested that political pressures might have affected the timing of the results' publication. "What you're suggesting sounds like a bad joke," he said. "It could never happen." He explained that, similar to Pfizer and Moderna, Gamaleya had published its results in accordance with the trial's protocol, which called for such findings to be released once a certain number of participants had contracted COVID-19. And few people were questioning the actual data: Sputnik V appeared to protect against illness as well as its competitors did. (The Gamaleya scientists also submitted the results to a scientific journal for review; the journal has yet to publish them.) Gushchin, from Gamaleya's genetic laboratory, said of the suspicions, "It's very sad to see. As if we're all a bunch of crazy Russian scientists who poured something into vials and said, 'Now go inject yourselves.'"

In mid-December, on the basis of data collected from some twenty-three thousand participants in its Phase III trial, Gamaleya issued its final determination of the vaccine's efficacy: 91.4 per cent. "I don't expect everyone to immediately love me and believe in my product," Logunov said. "There's no need to trust me. Just look at the numbers—the serological results of those vaccinated, the antibody titers they produce, their rates of infection." Nearly five hundred participants in the Phase III trial shared

information online as part of what they called a "people's research" project, meant as an independent check on Gamaleya's figures. No one reported any major side effects. Seventy-five per cent of people said that they had developed antibodies, as confirmed by private lab tests—a figure in line with the Gamaleya protocol for the trial.

The real success of Sputnik V may lie in its popularity with foreign markets, especially those that were shut out of the early global vaccine bonanza. A September report from Oxfam revealed that nations representing thirteen per cent of the world's population have purchased fifty-one per cent of all anticipated vaccine supplies. The U.K. and E.U. member states have secured orders for enough doses to vaccinate their entire populations nearly three times over. Covax, a program led by the W.H.O. to insure an equitable global vaccine supply, has said that it will likely be able to inoculate only twenty per cent of the populations of developing countries this year; as yet, none of those doses have been distributed.

"At the end of the day, I don't think it matters which vaccine was registered first," Twigg told me. "But being able to fill a need that other countries can't, or won't, is what is going to be most convincing." This year, Dmitriev expects five hundred million doses of Sputnik V to be produced by licensed partners abroad, in what the R.D.I.F. calls "technology transfer" deals. These could be particularly appealing to low- and middle-income countries; it may be cheaper for them to make vaccines than to compete on the international market. For those buying directly from Russia, Sputnik V costs less than twenty dollars for a single course of two doses—that's more than Oxford-AstraZeneca's vaccine, but less than the vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna, which run between thirty and forty dollars per course. Another selling point is logistical. Sputnik V, like Oxford-AstraZeneca's product, can be stored and transported in a standard medical refrigerator. The mRNA vaccines require much colder temperatures: five degrees Fahrenheit or below for Moderna's and minus seventy-six degrees or below for Pfizer's.

To date, more than fifty countries, including Algeria and Mexico, have preordered Sputnik V, and half a dozen plan to produce the vaccine themselves. A Phase III trial is under way in India, where a leading producer of generic medicines has already agreed to make more than a hundred million doses per year. In late December, after Argentina's negotiations to acquire the Pfizer vaccine stalled, an Aerolíneas Argentinas jet departed from Moscow loaded with three hundred thousand doses of Sputnik V, the first of twenty-five million that Argentina has agreed to buy. In January, officials in Kyrgyzstan, concerned about

the cold chain needed to transport the Pfizer vaccine, stated their preference for Sputnik V. That month, after Hungary accused the E.U. of being too slow in its vaccine rollout, the country approved Sputnik V, becoming the first in the E.U. to do so. (E.U. officials criticized Hungary for undermining European solidarity.) Such deals, Twigg pointed out, could pave the way for further diplomatic and commercial ties. "Russia could translate this reputational gain into other types of successes," she said.

Sputnik V forged its most intriguing international collaboration in mid-December, when AstraZeneca said that it would test a two-shot combination of its vector vaccine with Sputnik V's adenovirus-26 component. The company explained that combining vaccines "may be an important step in generating wider protection through a stronger immune response and better accessibility." Brazil is also considering Sputnik V, but it has delayed its approval until Russia provides additional details on its trial protocol and its manufacturing process.

Recently, international researchers have raised concerns about new strains of the coronavirus, particularly the South African variant, which carries a mutated spike protein that may help the virus bypass immune protection. Moderna announced that it was testing a "booster shot." Gushchin told me that Sputnik V's "protective efficacy may be reduced, but likely only by a little bit." Even if the virus did manage to get past a vaccinated person's antibodies, he explained, the T cell immune response should prevent that person from getting sick. "We're looking into it," he said.

On December 2nd, the U.K. issued emergency-use authorization to the Pfizer vaccine. Not to be outdone, Putin announced the civilian rollout of Sputnik V hours later. The inoculation would begin in Moscow, with health-care workers and others who had a high risk of exposure, including teachers and social workers. A poll taken in September, however, had shown that up to half of Russian doctors and other medical professionals weren't yet willing to get the vaccine, owing to the rushed approval process and a lack of concrete data about the safety and efficacy of Sputnik V. The Levada Center, an independent polling and research organization based in Moscow, found that, as of December, nearly sixty per cent of Russians did not wish to be vaccinated. (At the time, polls in the United States indicated that about a quarter of the population did not want to be vaccinated; in France, which has one of the largest anti-vax movements in Europe, the number hovered around fifty per cent.)

Denis Volkov, the deputy director of the Levada Center, told me, after attending a series of focus groups in Russia, "It seems that many people have no fear of getting infected. They consider this whole coronavirus topic some kind of nonsense." In late December, the head of Russia's coronavirus task force acknowledged that there might have been as many as a hundred and eighty thousand deaths in the country from COVID-19, three times the official tally, which would make it the third-highest number of any country in the world. Those losses are not widely covered in the media or frequently addressed by government officials. Volkov suggested that the state's propaganda campaign had failed. "The message should not have been that our vaccine is so great but, rather, that this virus is serious and dangerous."

On December 10th, the sixth day of Moscow's vaccination rollout, I drove to a municipal clinic just past the Ring Road. Signs directed people coming for Sputnik V to a second-floor waiting area next to a wall of windows that looked onto a kindergarten. The clinic's director, Andrey Tyazhelnikov, had been vaccinated in the fall. He told me that anyone who was skeptical should join him on his rounds. "It would be enough to show them all the patients being brought by ambulance, lying in the I.C.U., those who are dying," he said. "After that, I'm sure confidence would grow." In the two hours that I spent at the clinic, about twenty people came for their vaccinations. One man said, "Someone has to be first." Another said that he was proud Russia was "at the forefront in the battle against the pandemic."

By mid-December, the mayor's office had expanded the list of people eligible for inoculation to include factory workers, transport employees, and journalists, though it seemed that the city had far more vaccine than it had people wanting to be vaccinated. A number of Russian journalists I knew got vaccinated, then a fellow American correspondent living in Moscow.

The more I thought about it, the more I came to believe that, whatever uncertainty lingered about Sputnik V, remaining unvaccinated was the far greater crapshoot. Last spring, barely anyone I knew had been infected; I could now count dozens of acquaintances who had caught the virus. One spent a week at a makeshift hospital in a pavilion on Soviet-era exhibition grounds. Throughout the fall and winter, Moscow had been recording five or six thousand new COVID-19 cases almost every day. I felt like a character in an Agatha Christie novel: with every page, my turn seemed to be growing closer. Sputnik V was waiting for me at my neighborhood clinic. Who knew when I'd have access to any of the alternatives?

And so one afternoon, just before the New Year, I trudged through the snow to a city-run clinic on a quiet side street around the corner from Patriarch's Ponds, from which the Devil appears in the opening pages of Mikhail Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita." The young man at the check-in desk studied my documents, made a phone call, and said that, yes, the clinic could do it right away. After a quick consultation with a doctor, I was called for my shot. The jab was quick and almost painless. "Congratulations," the man at the desk said when I came back out. He handed me a stamped certificate.

That night, my arm was sore, but I did not get a fever or chills. I felt more relieved than nervous. Three weeks later, I had my second injection, which also passed uneventfully. In late January, I took a test for COVID-19 antibodies; the results, according to an interpretative scale provided by the clinic, indicated that my antibody levels were "probably sufficient" to prevent illness. The odds struck me as high that my own personal pandemic was nearing its end. I thought of something that Chumakov told me before I went for my vaccine. Russia, he said, had "demonstrated a certain willingness to cut corners. But that's no reason to say that the vaccine itself won't prove effective. It has no less a chance than any other—and, if indeed it turns out to be a success, who will remember or care about all that came before?" ♦

TIPS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS

BY NATHAN HELLER

Illinois GOP Rep. Mary Miller Apologizes for Her Remarks Praising Hitler at Pro-Trump Rally

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

Public speaking: it undoes the best of us. There is the desperate need to be amusing. There is the question of what on earth to do with your hands. There is the fear that, if you fail to prepare adequately, you could lose your train of thought, feel your palms go clammy, find yourself at a loss for words, and end up praising Hitler.

Trust me—we've all been there. One moment, you're a confident account manager blazing into the boardroom with a PowerPoint in tow; the next, you're a flustered, trembling mess, perspiring through your shirt and sputtering, "Europe never achieved unity because the Wehrmacht was resisted," or "But for the Führer, Germany would have been destroyed by bankers and global degenerates." You lose your place in your notes, and, instead of delivering the strategy pitch that was so smooth, so assured in your bedroom mirror, you find yourself declaring, "We must exterminate the gypsies."

Fumbles like these can cost you that coveted promotion, a lucrative new partnership, or public office in certain states. It's not always fair, but people are judged on their public-speaking skills, and on their ability not to talk about the historical inevitability of the Third Reich.

The good news, however, is that improvement is possible. Hope, like Argentina, remains within reach.

For decades, I have helped men and women in a range of professions to feel confident, communicate clearly, and stop expressing public sympathy for the Nazi project. Whether the goal is giving more memorable talks or cutting out nervous fillers—such as suddenly crying "Heil Hitler!" to the people in the front row—everybody benefits from coaching. I should know. I used to begin my work presentations with a three-minute warning about world domination by international Jewry. Now I start off with a joke.

Below are a few basic tips. Just remember: if at first you don't succeed, try, try, and make friends in the British aristocracy.

Most important: be a problem-solver. At some point in your talk, look audience members in the eye and say, "I have a solution for you." Try not to look audience members in the eye and say, "I have a final solution for you."

Speak in simple language. Say "use" instead of "utilize," and "detailed" instead of "granular." Try not to refer to your growth plan as an "Anschluss."

Hand gestures are your friend. Good ones involve open palms, joined fingertips, or spread arms. Do your best to avoid a "Sieg heil" salute, or pointing at a member of your audience with the words "This one, *ja*—step aside, please."

Make full use of your space. As a rule, try to cross the stage once for every two minutes of speaking. It will feel strange, especially if you don't click your heels on the turns, but it looks normal to the audience (promise).

Be a storyteller. "It was only five years ago that I hit rock bottom" is an arresting way to begin. "I want to take you on a journey" is another great start. "It was only five years ago that I ordered three tall blond men to start recording your comings, your goings, and your bathing habits" is less appealing—avoid it if you can.

Tell your listeners about a time you got it wrong. Let them learn from your mistakes. Don't just say, "We were all in the Resistance or cooking coq au vin—honestly, I barely even read the newspapers during those years."

Visual elements are a huge help, but only if they don't distract from *you*. Don't overcrowd your slides. If you skip ahead, say, "May I have the next slide, please?" Don't panic and scream, "*Schneller, Juden, schneller!*"

Keep to the basics. Don't use valuable time for inessential digressions—however important they may seem to you—such as praising "the mother to our Fatherland, the brilliant and very sexy Eva Braun."

Always ask questions of your audience. Pro tip: "Is the gold in your dental fillings pure?" isn't a good one.

Always remember that, although you may be the one speaking, you represent a team. If you like, give your team a fun name, like "Deborah's Dynamos" or "Carol's Cleanup Crew"—it can make the week go faster. "The Master Race" is not a good name for a work team.

Consider multimedia elements. I like to include a brief clip from a well-known movie to entertain my audience and drive the point home. "Home Alone" is a favorite. "Triumph of the Will" is less good. (Maybe try "Top Gun"?)

Don't overwhelm your audience with proper nouns. If you are talking about medical care, there is really no need to make reference to "the excellent researches of Dr. Mengele." (Obvious to you, I'm sure, but you'd be surprised how many people do this.)

Most of all, have fun out there. As long as you don't begin a sentence "Hitler was right on one thing . . . ," you'll be fine. Don't panic if you do, though—if you're lucky, everyone will soon forget that we got there at all. ♦

LUCI GUTIÉRREZ

THE COLOR OF MONEY

An activist tried to build a capital of Black capitalism. What could go wrong?

BY KELEFA SANNEH

In the fall of 1968, *Jet*, the Black weekly magazine, devoted a special issue to the upcoming election. On the cover was a cheerful headline: "HOW BLACK VOTE CAN ELECT NEXT PRESIDENT." Inside, the editors were less upbeat, reproaching the candidates for not doing more to "woo actively" the Black vote. In an effort to do some last-minute wooing, both of the major candidates had taken out two-page advertisements in the issue. Hubert Humphrey, the Democrat, was popular with Black voters, and sought to remind readers of something he felt they should already know. "Vote for Hubert Humphrey and you'll help elect the right man President," his advertisement said. "Don't vote and you'll help elect the wrong one." The "wrong one"—Richard Nixon, the Republican contender—had a more specific pitch. His ad showed a Black man in a letterman sweater, beneath the exhortation "This time, vote like Homer Pitts' whole world depended on it." Pitts, it seemed, was a fictional college student facing an uncertain future. And there was a Presidential candidate who wanted to help him:

> A vote for Richard Nixon for President is a vote for a man who wants Homer to have the chance to own his own business. Richard Nixon believes strongly in black capitalism. Because black capitalism is black power in the best sense of the word. . . . It's the key to the black man's fight for equality—for a piece of the action.

This was the heart of Nixon's outreach to Black voters in 1968: "Black capitalism," an ideal of independence that promised to unite militants and moderates, Black nationalists and white centrists. This sales pitch does not seem to have been a big success. Although Nixon won, narrowly, polls and voting data suggest that Black voters went predominantly for Humphrey. And yet the notion of "Black capitalism" gained influence, prompting an ongoing debate about what it meant, and whether it represented progress. The Black Panther Party often denounced capitalism, and Bobby Seale, who helped found the group, wrote in 1970 that Black capitalism was part of the problem. "We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black capitalism," he declared. "We fight capitalism with basic socialism." But the next year another founding Panther, Huey P. Newton, wrote that Black capitalism could contribute to liberation, and that reject-

ALAMY

Had plans for Soul City worked out, its founder might have joined Martin and Malcolm in the pantheon of Black uplift.

ing it was "a counterrevolutionary position." To many Black people, "Black capitalism" had come to mean "Black control" of local neighborhoods, local industry. How could any Black Panther be opposed to that?

Arguments about Black capitalism were often rather theoretical. But there was one place in America where a group of pioneers tried to build a community devoted to it, upholding both Nixonian free enterprise and Black self-determination. The place was Soul City, a settlement in rural North Carolina, near the Virginia border, which was founded in 1969, and which is the subject of a new book by Thomas Healy, a law professor and a former journalist. In "Soul City," he explains how this experiment in Black capitalism was tried, and also how it failed. It is no spoiler to acknowledge this failure at the outset; Healy's subtitle refers to Soul City as "the Lost Dream of an American Utopia." The modern story of race in America might be told quite differently if there really were, as there was once meant to be, a prosperous Black mini-metropolis of fifty-five thousand people in North Carolina, serving as a beacon for activists and entrepreneurs everywhere. If Soul City had succeeded, perhaps its founder would be enshrined alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X in the pantheon of Black uplift.

That founder was Floyd McKissick, a lawyer who had risen through the ranks to become the leader of the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE, which he helped transform into a militant alternative to more cautious civil-rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He left CORE, it seems, not so much because he wanted to make money as because he felt that the best way to help Black people in America was to help some of them make money. Healy argues that McKissick's dream of a new Black homeland in rural North Carolina could have come true, if not for the backlash it inspired. "It was going to be a beautiful place to live," one of the earliest residents said.

Healy is one of many who have described Soul City as a would-be utopia, but McKissick viewed himself as a realist and a wised-up dealmaker. Like many Black capitalists throughout history, he had been frustrated by the slow pace and limited success of governmental reforms. "Unless the Black Man attains economic independence," he wrote, "any 'political independence' will be an illusion." As he discovered, these two forms of independence can be hard to disentangle. The demise of Soul City effectively ended McKissick's time as a national public figure, but the lure of Black economic independence never faded. Last year, following the protests for racial justice, many organizations and corporations launched initiatives to support Black-owned businesses; Facebook urged users to "#BuyBlack for the holidays." The idea hasn't changed much since Nixon's time: to see that every Homer Pitts gets his "piece of the action." As an ideal, Black capitalism has endured. But how does it work?

McKissick had once been an accomplished integrationist. After being turned away from the University of North Carolina's law school, which barred Black students, he became one of the plaintiffs in a case brought by the N.A.A.C.P., which won a court order in 1951 that obliged U.N.C. to admit McKissick and change its policies. (Once there, McKissick did some impromptu activism at the segregated swimming pool, jumping in fully dressed and declaring, "It's integrated now!") In 1959, two of his children enrolled at a previously all-white public school in Durham. And in 1966, as the newly installed national director of CORE, he joined the March Against Fear, a walking protest through Tennessee and Mississippi, alongside King and a younger radical, Stokely Carmichael. In this magazine, Renata Adler reported that McKissick initially "mediated" between King and his followers, who called for "freedom now," and Carmichael's group, who chanted, "Black power!" The march helped propel "Black power" into the public consciousness, and it may have helped radicalize McKissick, who was with the group in Canton, Mississippi, when it was teargassed by state troopers. That night, McKissick made it clear that he was siding with Carmichael. "They don't call it *white* power," he said, referring to the teargassers and their allies. "They just call it *power*. I'm committed to non-violence, but I say what we need is to get us some *black* power."

CORE had been founded, in 1942, to fight segregation; McKissick gave it a more assertively Black identity. Not long before the march, he had moved its headquarters from lower Manhattan to Harlem, and the next year CORE expunged the word "multiracial" from its official self-description, effectively sidelining its white members. (A *Times* editorial suggested that the change betokened a policy of "segregation in reverse.") McKissick emerges in Healy's book as a shrewd but slightly mysterious figure, propelled by a complicated combination of strategy, pride, and conviction. On April 4, 1968, he was in Cleveland, promoting an ambitious effort to get white business owners to build factories in the city's "ghetto" neighborhoods; the idea was that once the factories had recouped their initial investments the Black workers could assume ownership. The same day, in Memphis, King was assassinated, and McKissick responded with anger and a hint of fatalism. "Nonviolence is a dead philosophy," he told the *Times*, "and it was not the black people that killed it."

At the time, McKissick was seen as a candidate to succeed King as the preëminent voice of Black America, but McKissick realized that there could never be another leader of Black America—it was hard enough being the leader of CORE, which was riven by arguments over tactics and ideology. And so, a few months after King's death, McKissick left the group to start McKissick Enterprises, which promised to invest in everything from restaurants to book publishing. In a brochure announcing the new venture, McKissick said that his focus was "the development of Black Economic Power," which he called the "last chance to save the Republic." No more marching, and no more pleading—it was time to build.

Within months, McKissick Enterprises decided that it would build a city. This was not an unusual ambition; in fact, McKissick's genius was to bring together two trends then ascendant. There was a vogue for master-planned

communities, sometimes known as "new towns," such as Reston, Virginia, founded in 1964, and Columbia, Maryland, founded in 1967. And there was a continuing determination to transform the so-called "ghettos"—neighborhoods that were widely thought to be not just a reflection of Black poverty but a cause of it. McKissick proposed to rescue Black people from the economic stasis of ghettos by creating a new town designed by and for Black people. Whenever he was challenged, as he often was, McKissick stipulated that his community would be "open to all races." But the name Soul City reflected the Black identity that was, for McKissick, one of its most important selling points. He was a stern and effective presence on television, with a skeptical squint and a crooked smile that could be even more skeptical than the squint. During one of his innumerable media appearances, he promised that Soul City would be "a place where Black people can come, and know they're wanted."

The appeal of Soul City was a chance to start anew. McKissick didn't see the community as an extension of the long history of Black settlements in America; the whole idea was to build something where just about nothing existed, so as not to be influenced by whatever it was that made many Black neighborhoods inimical to prosperity. McKissick found a plot of eighteen hundred acres of undeveloped land, available for three hundred and ninety thousand dollars—a good price, although it was evidently about three hundred and eighty-seven thousand dollars more than McKissick Enterprises had on hand. Chase Bank agreed to loan McKissick half the purchase price, and the seller agreed to accept it as a down payment. In late February, 1969, McKissick closed the deal.

The story of Soul City has been told a number of times over the years, and few of the tellers have failed to notice the central irony: McKissick's experiment in Black independence depended on the benevolence of white government officials. As McKissick was launching his company, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, which directed the government to finance "the development of new communities." By the time McKissick bought his land, a new President had been inaugurated, and much of the history of Soul City involves McKissick doggedly attempting to shake money loose from the Nixon Administration. Dozens of construction workers took up residence in trailers on the property, but prospective employers weren't eager to move to Soul City without prospective employees, and vice versa. "Three years of my life have gone into this project," McKissick wrote, at one point, to a sympathetic government official. "I am sure my creditors within the next ten days will be on the attack unless McKissick Enterprises secures additional funds." In his effort to get free from white control, and from political wrangling, McKissick wound up more ensnarled in these things than ever.

The modern argument over Black capitalism began much earlier. In 1895, a Black educator named Booker T. Washington gave a speech in Atlanta calling for Black people to embrace life in the South, despite all its hardships. "It is in the South that the Negro is given a man's chance in the commercial world," Washington said. He promised his Black listeners that they could prosper through hard work, and promised white listeners that Black people would not immediately demand full rights or full integration. "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers," Washington said, "yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." The speech transformed Washington into a celebrity, although plenty of Black leaders disagreed with it, none more eloquently than W. E. B. Du Bois, who gave the speech a derisive nickname ("The Atlanta Compromise"), and argued that it was "utterly impossible, under modern competitive methods, for workingmen and property-owners to defend their rights and exist without the right of suffrage." If Black people were to be effective capitalists, they had to become full citizens first.

A couple of decades later, Du Bois reconsidered. In 1934, in a series of columns in *The Crisis*, the official publication of the N.A.A.C.P., he argued that "thinking colored people of the United States" were too preoccupied with integration. He suggested that, in the face of prejudice and violence, Black people should use the power of the market to liberate themselves. "The great step ahead today is for the American Negro to accomplish his economic emancipation through voluntary determined cooperative effort," he wrote. He extolled the value of Black churches, colleges, and newspapers, and charged that the N.A.A.C.P. had lost sight of its historic support for "Negro business enterprise."

This argument got Du Bois cancelled, in the literal sense: under pressure, he resigned from the N.A.A.C.P. and discontinued his column, despite the fact that he was the founding editor of *The Crisis*, and a co-founder of the N.A.A.C.P. itself. In the Pittsburgh *Courier*, a leading Black newspaper, Du Bois's change of heart was headline news: "RACE STUNNED AS FORMER CHAMPION OF EQUAL RIGHTS ASSUMES PACIFIST ATTITUDE." In fact, the columns did not seem especially pacific. Du Bois wrote with enthusiasm about all the things Black people could do without white help. And his final dispatch for *The Crisis*, published in June, was an extraordinary cry of anguish and defiance:

> Negroes are not wanted. . . . What can we do about it? We cannot use force. We cannot enforce law, even if we get it on the statute books. So long as overwhelming public opinion sanctions and justifies and defends color segregation, we are helpless, and without remedy. . . . We have got to renounce a program that always involves humiliating self-stultifying scrambling to crawl somewhere where we are not wanted; where we crouch panting like a whipped dog. We have got to stop this and learn that on such a program they cannot build manhood. No, by God, stand erect in a mudpuddle and tell the white world to go to hell, rather than lick boots in a parlor.

The cause of Black capitalism has often been championed not by successful entrepreneurs but by leaders who wanted to "tell the white world to go to hell," even if they didn't agree about

where they wanted the Black world to go. In 1916, a Jamaican crusader named Marcus Garvey arrived in the United States and set about building an international movement for Black liberation. To fund his shipping company, the Black Star Line, he issued hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of shares, using the proceeds to buy three steamships, none of which turned out to be particularly seaworthy. Investors lost their money, and Garvey was convicted of fraud, but he was widely revered for his grand parades, and for his vision of a world where Black people could do without white people. He often urged Black Americans to resettle in Africa, a continent that he himself never visited.

Elijah Muhammad, the leader of the Nation of Islam, promoted a similar mixture of Black nationalism and Black capitalism, telling his followers, "Build your own homes, schools, hospitals, and factories." Precisely because he trusted white people so little—he taught that they were devils—Muhammad warned Black people not to expect much from them, reproaching King and other civil-rights leaders for their dangerous naïveté. "Get away from that childish way of thinking that the white man forever owes it to you to provide for you the necessities of life," Muhammad wrote, in 1965. He counselled his readers to buy farmland and start businesses instead.

Nixon was not wrong to discern in this tradition a conservative impulse. Compared with King, who had called for billions of dollars of federal aid for "the Negro community," many Black-power advocates seemed to be making less expensive demands. In April, 1968, Nixon gave a radio address in which he claimed that some of the "militant" Black activists were on his side, or ought to be. He praised those who abandoned "welfarist" rhetoric in order to extol the importance of "ownership" and "self-respect." And he called for a "new approach" that would be grounded in "Black capitalism." The speech helped popularize the term, and it attracted the attention of a number of Black leaders, including McKissick, who met with Nixon the next month. McKissick didn't endorse Nixon in 1968, but he wrote a series of cautiously optimistic columns in the *Amsterdam News*, a Black weekly newspaper, saying that he expected Nixon to "make many changes for the good of Black People." He also issued a warning: "If Nixon talks Black Capitalism, he must deliver."

Two years after buying the land, McKissick finally moved to North Carolina, with his wife, Evelyn, and his teen-age daughter, Charmaine. They had been living in Harlem, and McKissick still carried himself like a big-city power broker, even when he was living in a construction trailer parked next to a cornfield. A few years later, driving from Soul City to the local airport, he was involved in a serious car accident. Charmaine tells Healy that, when she went to see her father in the hospital, he feigned outrage over what the first responders had done to his Yves Saint Laurent outfit. "Doodlebug, they fucked up my suit," he told her.

Healy's book provides only brief glimpses of McKissick's personality—just enough to convey the impression that his grand project brought him more sorrow than joy. From the start, Soul City attracted plenty of media coverage, much of it critical. (From the Baltimore *Sun:* "The chasm dividing the present dream from the future reality could hardly be greater if Mr. McKissick intended to build this city on the moon.") But its existence, even in a preliminary form, was a tangible example of Black capitalism under Nixon, and so in late 1971, when McKissick had trouble getting loans from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, he wrote to a friend in the Administration that he was prepared to switch sides from Democrat to Republican, and to publicly back Nixon's 1972 reëlection campaign. The offer was accepted, and McKissick became an enthusiastic Nixon surrogate, giving the keynote address at a lively gathering of Black Nixon supporters who included Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, and the jazz musician Lionel Hampton, who performed an original composition, "We Need Nixon." The song seems to have been less memorable than McKissick's speech, in which he compared the Democratic Party to a "sugar tit," a baby's pacifier that offered temporary succor but no nutrition. "I've tasted a little bit of cream and a little bit of milk," McKissick said. "There's food in the land—it's goodbye old sugar tit!"

Not long afterward, McKissick secured a pair of government grants for

"Do you prefer to have your medication hidden in the salmon crudo or the beef tartare?"

Soul City: half a million dollars toward the construction of an industrial park, and a million toward a health-care center. In July, 1972, the federal government agreed to guarantee fourteen million dollars of Soul City's debt, for infrastructure improvements, like road paving and electrification, meant to lure businesses. Healy suggests that McKissick deserved these grants, but he also concedes that McKissick was selling his political loyalty, at the same moment that the Nixon Administration was looking to buy some.

McKissick was not mentioned in the Senate's 1974 Watergate report, but it documented the existence of what was known within the White House as the Responsiveness Program. One memo, from 1972, called for "incentives for Black individuals, firms, and organizations whose support will have a multiplier effect on Black vote support for the President." Another hailed the existence of "an excellent group of visible Blacks" who had received funding as part of the program. During the 1972 campaign, McKissick was indeed unusually "visible." He gave speeches on the importance of liberating Black voters from Democratic "captivity," and the Nixon campaign published an advertisement featuring Soul City: "Democrats endorsed it. Republicans supported it. That's Action." After Nixon was reëlected, George H. W. Bush, who was then in charge of the Republican National Committee, suggested that McKissick was helping to change the image of the G.O.P.

Even with the President on its side, though, Soul City faced extraordinary political opposition. Newspaper articles noted that, despite lots of federal money, the town still hadn't sprung to life; the Government Accountability Office hunted for corruption and impropriety, though it found nothing worse than occasional incompetence. Matters weren't helped when, in 1972, a former Democrat named Jesse Helms won a North Carolina race for the U.S. Senate—as a Republican, although with no help from McKissick, who declined to endorse a candidate. Helms was known for his hostility to the civil-rights movement, and he told McKissick, "I do not favor the expenditure of taxpayers' funds for the project known as 'Soul City.'"

It isn't clear that McKissick was wasting taxpayer money, but the idea was hard to refute, especially when Soul City consisted mainly of a health clinic, a few shops, a cluster of trailers, and some upgraded utilities. McKissick's support for Nixon wasn't much of an asset after Nixon's resignation, and his Republicanism, however nominal, was even less helpful after the election, in 1976, of Jimmy Carter, a Democrat who was sympathetic to civil rights but not particularly interested in Soul City. At one point, McKissick even considered changing the name, which he loved, as a way of making his town more appealing to white corporations and tenants. (A report commissioned by HUD had found that the name had "a negative connotation" for white people.) HUD finally foreclosed on the property in May, 1980, leaving McKissick Enterprises with a small fraction of the land and some mortgages to pay. He rejoined the Democratic Party and lived quietly as a trial lawyer and, after a late-in-life divinity degree, a preacher; he died from lung cancer, in 1991, aged sixty-nine. Today, in the former future home of Soul City, there is not much to see besides a medium-security prison—a planned community but in no sense a utopia.

One of the people who helped plan Soul City was a young Black architect named Harvey Gantt, who later became the mayor of Charlotte, and who twice ran for the Senate as a Democrat against Helms, unsuccessfully. Talking to Healy, Gantt says that when he thinks of Soul City he sometimes wonders, "Why did I think that was going to succeed?" In defense of McKissick's vision, Healy points out that Soul City was not unusually troubled: HUD funded thirteen new towns, only one of which endures today—the Woodlands, a majority-white outlying suburb of Houston. It is impossible to disprove the contention that, with sufficient government investment, Soul City might have thrived. (With sufficient support, just about *any* settlement might succeed.) But the promise of Black capitalism was a promise of independence, a promise that Black people could run their own businesses and make their own rules. What McKissick learned was that, for a Black leader in nineteen-seventies America, begging Republicans for money was not necessarily more rewarding, or less humiliating, than begging Democrats for money. One can imagine a world in which a Black planned community in North Carolina would be met with widespread enthusiasm and generous federal funding. But in that world many other government programs might look much more feasible, too, and McKissick might not have had cause to complain about the "sugar tit" of the Democratic Party. In that world, he might not have felt moved to create a new city at all.

There is a paradox at the heart of "Black capitalism," two words that pull in opposite directions, toward both community-mindedness and individual striving. When Du Bois proposed "economic emancipation through voluntary determined cooperative effort," a slogan not designed with placards in mind, he was simultaneously embracing the private sector and urging it to be more public-spirited. And, of course, Soul City, even in theory, turned out to be something less than an archetype of Black capitalism. Because the settlement relied on HUD funding, it was prohibited from discriminating against any potential resident. In other words, McKissick could not accurately say that his city would be unambiguously capitalist, or unambiguously Black.

Aside from Soul City, Nixon's major Black-capitalist initiative was the creation, in 1969, of the Office of Minority Business Enterprise, which is now known as the Minority Business Development Agency, and which functions as a kind of internal lobbying group. (In December, the incoming Biden Administration said that it was going to direct the M.B.D.A. to "coordinate all federal offices to reduce barriers to procurement for underrepresented groups, including all types of minority-owned businesses.") The modesty of Nixon's efforts to support Black

capitalism made the term itself sound rather cynical, especially once his various schemes had been exposed.

But the entrepreneurial spirit Nixon identified really did exist—there was a reason that, in 1968, "Black capitalism" seemed like an appealing political slogan. It was a time when many corporations were scrambling to appear supportive of social change, and many activists were trying to decide what to make of them. In a recent book titled "Franchise," the historian Marcia Chatelain chronicles how McDonald's reacted to protests and urban unrest in the nineteen-sixties: by recruiting Black franchisees, who in 1972 came together to found the National Black McDonald's Operators Association. It still exists, and calls itself "the largest organization of established African American entrepreneurs in the world." If Black capitalism works, then this is how: not through high-profile government initiatives but through trade groups that most people have never heard of—Black capitalists quietly helping one another make money.

One of the oddest things about Black capitalism is that its major proponents have generally emerged from the world of activism, not of capitalism. Madam C. J. Walker, who built an empire of beauty products in the nineteen-tens, was among the most celebrated Black entrepreneurs of the twentieth century and a strong supporter of civil rights, but she did not generally speak the language of Black capitalism. If "Black capitalist" described her life, it did not necessarily describe her ideology. George and Joan Johnson were the founders of Johnson Products, the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange (in 1971), but they, too, seemed more interested in practicing Black capitalism than in preaching it. Even apparently sympathetic politicians have often declined to wave the banner of Black capitalism. "Black capitalism is not our panacea," Maynard Jackson, the vice-mayor of Atlanta, declared at a National Urban League conference in 1970. Three years later, he was elected the city's first Black mayor, and he helped establish Atlanta as a Black business hub—the real Soul City, you might say. And some community groups, like the Harlem Commonwealth Council, prospered by helping draw businesses to preëxisting Black communities. By contrast, the avowed Black capitalists have sometimes produced more inspiration than enrichment. Floyd McKissick once wrote that Marcus Garvey, despite his "financial failure," had done a lot for "Black pride and cohesiveness." Healy writes a similar encomium to McKissick near the end of his book, lauding his "vision and courage." He dreamed big, and he went bust. Perhaps that, too, is Black capitalism.

What is the alternative? Last summer, amid the protests for racial justice, sharp criticism of capitalism was common. But so were efforts to celebrate and support Black businesses, and demands for corporations to promote more Black executives. Some activists criticized "white capitalism," a crafty formulation that McKissick probably would have appreciated, because it leaves open the possibility that *non*-white capitalism deserves support. At the same time, President Trump made a Nixonian pitch to Black voters, reminding them how well they had done under his Administration, at least until the pandemic.

Paeans to Black capitalism are everywhere, even though the term has fallen out of favor. In 1971, Huey Newton argued that Black capitalists were more trustworthy than white capitalists, not because they were nobler but because they were weaker and poorer, and therefore had to be more accountable. "If he wants to succeed in his enterprise," Newton wrote, "the Black capitalist must turn to the community because he depends on them to make his profits." This formulation helps explain why ambitious Black capitalists have tended not to espouse Black capitalism: they know that in order to prosper they may have to grow less dependent on the Black community and more tightly integrated into the broader economy. Half a century after Nixon's campaign promise, it is still unclear how much the federal government can do to foster Black business ownership; in the world of entrepreneurship, as elsewhere, racial disparities have survived many attempted remedies. But there seems to be broad agreement that we should celebrate the achievements of Black entrepreneurs and executives, no matter which communities they serve. This, after all, is the promise of capitalism, and often the reality: it makes us less separate, while also making us less equal. The world it creates does not resemble a utopia—unless, of course, you compare it with the world that came before. ♦

"Remember when we were first dating and we couldn't keep our hands off each other and we pulled over to the side of the road outside Scranton and made love right there in the car? I think that's when I hurt my back."

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE DAMAGE

Trump transformed immigration through hundreds of quiet measures. Can they be uncovered and reversed?

BY SARAH STILLMAN

Maria was sitting in her room sketching a pink hibiscus, one evening last May, when she heard footsteps coming down the hallway. A fourteen-year-old asylum seeker from Honduras, she was living at Abbott House, a child-welfare agency in Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, that cares for unaccompanied migrant children. The law required that, as a minor, Maria have the chance to be released to a cousin in Miami, but the reunion had repeatedly been delayed. For the past three months, she had spent her evenings watching Disney sitcoms and learning English-language sentences. ("The little girl tripped over the crack in the pavement.") That night, at about 8 P.M., a staffer told her that she had a phone call from her lawyer, Hannah Flamm, who works with a nonprofit called the Door. Maria hustled to the administrator's office, wearing her pajamas and a mask. Flamm told her, "If immigration agents come for you tonight, I want you to know that you don't have to talk to them, O.K.?"

Flamm had just got a tip that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement planned to execute a warrant for Maria's removal, and to put her on a 3 A.M. flight to Texas, and then to Honduras. The news struck Flamm as bizarre, and likely illegal. As an unaccompanied child seeking asylum, Maria had the right to make her case to an asylum officer, and, if necessary, to get a full hearing before an immigration judge. Moreover, ICE had said that most immigration raids would be placed on pause during the pandemic lockdown. Flamm couldn't believe that agents would seek to deport a child in the middle of the night, during a global crisis, without informing her attorney or her family. She told Maria that she was on her way to Abbott House and cautioned her that she was not obliged to sign any documents until she arrived.

Maria had fled Honduras in 2019, after her father was killed, and her teen-age sister was kidnapped and tortured by gunmen, including a Honduran policeman. (Maria and her family members requested the use of pseudonyms to protect their safety.) At the southern border, Maria and her mother, Gabriela, claimed asylum, but were redirected to a new program called the Migrant Protection Protocols, and made to await their hearing in a dangerous Mexican border town. After a few months, they lost the case. Gabriela, in anguish, sent Maria back to the border on her own, hoping that, as an unaccompanied minor, she would be given protections. During the past few years, Maria, once outgoing, had become withdrawn. "It's like she's locked inside herself," Gabriela told me. At Abbott House, where Maria was given a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, a therapist taught her meditation techniques, and how to differentiate among Minor Problems, Medium Problems, and Big Problems. As she walked back to her room, Maria spotted a Big Problem: an ICE agent holding a manila envelope with her photograph taped to the front, and a child's suitcase.

Flamm, on her way to Abbott House, made urgent calls to colleagues, trying to figure out what was going on. She reached an attorney from the A.C.L.U. of Pennsylvania, who told her that, two days earlier, ICE had tried to send his teen-age client back to Guatemala on a 3 A.M. flight. The Justice Action Center, a nonprofit based in Los Angeles, had recently filed a lawsuit, with other groups, on behalf of three siblings who had been similarly targeted for removal. Esther Sung, a lawyer on the case, found evidence that, amid the pandemic, ICE had sought to round up and deport asylum-seeking kids, some as young as eight, in government shelters around the country, "without having a real plan for what would happen to the children, and into whose custody they would be placed, once they were removed." It seemed as though ICE had quietly decided to target children who had lost cases with their families at the border, through the Migrant Protection Protocols, and then sought asylum on their own. (ICE did not respond to requests for comment.)

The Presidency of Donald Trump may be defined, in part, by his assaults on the immigration system, many of which are well known. During his first full week in office, he banned travel from seven Muslim-majority countries, and temporarily blocked all refugee resettlement. Months later, he rescinded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which sheltered hundreds of thousands of undocumented youths from deportation. His Administration also separated nearly five thousand children from their parents and guardians at the southern border, hundreds of whom have still not been reunited. But, in the past several years, Flamm and her colleagues at the Door have also found themselves pitted against an extensive, unpublicized bureaucratic effort to transform immigration through rule changes, adjustments to asylum officers' guidelines, modifications to enforcement norms, and other measures. Flamm has worked tirelessly to keep up. "At first, I'd print out and highlight each new change," she told me. But, in a matter of months, "it was just a monstrous pile of paper on my desk."

When Flamm arrived at Abbott House, Maria finished up her drawing on a piece of paper that her art teacher had given her; underneath, the

In 2017, Lucas Guttentag launched a project to track every Trump-era change to the immigration system.

ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE J. KIM

• • •

teacher had written, "Women warriors don't let themselves be defeated. . . . Be strong. Be brave." A colleague of Flamm's eventually reached a judge, who agreed that Maria's case was an emergency, and, at 11:47 P.M., temporarily halted Maria's removal, granting her time to spell out her legal claims. Ten days later, Maria boarded a flight to join her cousin in Miami, where she would await news of her fate. In a journal she kept, she wrote, of the night the ICE agent appeared, "It was one of the most traumatic and ugly experiences I've had."

Flamm's organization, along with the law firm Paul, Weiss, has since filed a federal lawsuit on Maria's behalf, A.D.R.S. v. William Barr, aiming to stop Maria's removal to Honduras. Several weeks ago, the Justice Action Center and other groups filed another lawsuit that seeks to reinstate the rights of children in Maria's position. The cases are ongoing, and attorneys hope that they will set a valuable precedent for hundreds of kids. Sung, at the Justice Action Center, has also submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to unearth details about why the government chose to target unaccompanied minors like Maria. "We knew that something had changed," Flamm told me. "But we didn't know exactly what."

On Joe Biden's first day as President, he began an effort to dismantle Trump's most notorious anti-immigrant policies, calling them "a stain on our national conscience." Just hours after entering the Oval Office, Biden proposed legislation granting an eight-year path to citizenship for nearly eleven million undocumented immigrants, and restoring and expanding refugee resettlement. He also released executive actions ending the travel ban, halting the construction of the border wall, and strengthening DACA. But for every Trump-era policy that Biden has reversed, hundreds of lesser-known measures remain. A month after Trump's Inauguration, Steve Bannon, his chief strategist, promised to pursue "the deconstruction of the Administrative state." But Trump made aggressive use of executive power in the realm of immigration. Stephen Miller, a senior policy adviser to the President, convened a weekly meeting to devise creative methods of restricting immigration. "Stephen knew how to control immigration policy by getting his people into key positions and using whatever levers of executive authority he could," one of his White House colleagues told me.

Some of the changes that came out of Miller's meetings were pushed through as formal rules, which must be published in the Federal Register, and opened to public comment. But others were crafted through less visible administrative actions. In 2015, a Libertarian scholar named Clyde Wayne Crews, Jr., coined the term "regulatory dark matter" to describe the vast array of internal guidance memos, bulletins, circulars, and "thousands of other such documents that are subject to little scrutiny or democratic accountability." In astrophysics, Crews wrote, "dark matter and dark energy make up most of the universe, rendering the bulk of existence beyond our ability to directly observe. Here on Earth, in the United States, there is also 'regulatory dark matter' that is hard to detect, much less measure." His criticism was aimed at the Obama Administration, which often used administrative action to bypass congressional gridlock, but Trump's immigration team embraced the approach. Unlike rules, regulatory dark matter does not have to be announced, which can make it both difficult to enumerate and difficult for future Administrations to reverse.

In the past four years, immigrants'-rights groups have improvised ways of keeping track. Kids in Need of Defense tallied changes that affected unaccompanied minors, and the Migration Policy Institute did the same for other vulnerable groups, including refugees who were stranded abroad. Immigrants have devised their own tools. In a detention facility in Florida, a group of African asylum seekers kept, on the walls of their cell, a list of the harshest immigration judges, developing a star system akin to Uber ratings. In Tijuana, asylum seekers kept a tattered notebook called La Lista, in which they tracked people waiting to present at a port of entry, given that Customs and Border Protection, through a policy called "metering," was allowing only a small number to cross each day. "This has never been a political game for us," Greisa Martinez Rosas, the executive director of United We Dream, told me, of her own group's efforts. "We had to follow how Trump

used the full extent of his political office to bring detention and deportation and death to our communities."

One of the most fastidious chroniclers of this vast record is Lucas Guttentag, a law professor at Yale and Stanford. Guttentag is in his sixties, with plastic-framed glasses and the warmth of a genial high-school principal. In the eighties, he founded the A.C.L.U.'s Immigrants' Rights Project, and later worked in Barack Obama's Department of Homeland Security. When Trump came to power, Guttentag was alarmed not just by the pace of executive orders but also by the dozens of provisions tucked within them like "ticking time bombs," as he put it. One created a special office to study the effects of crimes committed by "criminal aliens." Another sought to expand the use of "expedited removal," a tool for fast-tracking deportations.

In the fall of 2017, Guttentag assembled a group of law students in a wood-panelled room at Yale. He proposed creating a communally sourced database of every change that Trump made to the immigration system. "So many things have happened in year one of Trump that are already receding from our memory, because we're looking at the latest disaster," he said. "If we don't keep track, it will take a new Administration years just to unearth everything that's happened." They called it the Immigration Policy Tracking Project. Guttentag hoped that the database would prove useful to whoever succeeded Trump. "Going forward, we're going to capture everything," he told the team. "Someday we'll need a road map for reversing all this damage."

The students carved up immigration policy into what one of them, Rebecca Chan, described to me as "little fiefdoms": humanitarian protections, labor laws, immigrant visas, citizenship. Then they performed a kind of public-policy forensics, searching for evidence of new policies in the Federal Register, legal blogs, government Web sites, Listservs for immigration attorneys, and nonprofit newsletters. When they found a change, they logged it in a private database, along with the text of the Obama-era policy that preceded it, and might otherwise be lost. They worked in relative secrecy: some students worried that their database would get hacked by white-supremacist trolls or be co-opted by Trump officials for bragging rights.

Many of the tweaks in the Tracker seem deceptively mundane. Last year, the Administration finalized a rule to nearly double the cost of the naturalization application, from six hundred and forty dollars to a thousand and thirty. (A federal judge in California blocked the rule's implementation, much as dozens of other changes identified in the Tracker have been enjoined in court.) Guttentag told me, "Literally changing one single word on a form can make a lot of difference." In January, 2020, the ombudsman for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services issued an alert that the agency had begun rejecting certain paperwork if the blank spaces weren't filled out with the term "N/A," for "non-applicable." In December, U.S.C.I.S. redesigned the civics exam given to those applying for citizenship, doubling the number of questions, and giving some answers a conservative bent. The answer to the question "Who does a U.S. Senator represent?" used to be "All people of the state," but now specifies "Citizens of their state." All told, new administrative hurdles and other obstacles have cut the number of legal immigrants to the U.S. nearly in half.

By the end of Trump's Presidency, Guttentag's Trackers had logged a thousand and fifty-eight changes to the immigration system. Early in the process, he gave me access to the Tracker, and I began to report on the human toll of the lesser-known policies, enlisting a team of postgraduate fellows from the Global Migration Project at Columbia's Journalism School. In the past few years, we have spoken to two hundred people who bore the brunt of these changes, and found more than sixty cases of irreparable harm that resulted, including torture, sexual assault, and death.

We followed, for instance, one of the "ticking time bombs" that Guttentag spotted in Trump's early orders: the sanctioning of countries that refused to accept deportees. Recent conflict zones, including Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, were pressured into receiving deportees even as their own governments expressed doubts about their ability to insure the safety of those who had been repatriated. In 2017, the number of people deported to these so-called "recalcitrant" countries more than doubled; Mauritania saw a tenfold increase between 2016 and 2018, despite the fact that Black Mauritanians are often imprisoned and tortured by the government. My Columbia team matched the pressures placed on "recalcitrant countries" to more than a dozen cases in which people faced irreparable harm.

Soon after Trump took office, thousands of Somalis were slated for deportation. (The Obama Administration, too, had pushed the country to accept deportees.) Some reported being shackled for forty hours, beaten, called the N-word, and told that they were being flown "back to the jungle." (ICE has denied the beatings, and declined to comment on the racist language.) Ahmed Salah, an asylum seeker in his late twenties, was forcibly returned to Somalia during Trump's first week in office. His cellmate claims that ICE agents coerced his signature on the required paperwork, and said, "Trump decides now." (ICE did not respond to requests for comment on Salah's case.) Two years later, Salah was killed in a car bombing likely set off by Al-Shabab insurgents. "He was a victim on both sides," Salah's wife told me, from Mogadishu. "The anti-American extremists on the one hand, and the anti-immigrant Americans on the other."

Guttentag developed a deep understanding of technocratic minutiae during his time in the Obama Administration. After years spent suing the federal government, he joined D.H.S., in 2014, as a senior counsellor; at the time, Obama was trying to address critics' claims that he had become the country's "Deporter-in-Chief." The

Republican Speaker of the House had already blocked an immigration-reform bill that the President had supported. So Obama began issuing far-reaching executive actions, and D.H.S. approved internal guidance memos, directives, and memoranda—its own dark matter. Guttentag embraced the idea as a savvy way of effecting change in light of congressional obstinance.

At the time, ICE often placed transgender women seeking asylum in men's detention facilities for months or even years, where they were subjected to rampant verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. As a result, many surrendered legitimate claims. If they were released on bond, the vast majority appeared at their immigration hearings. "We realized it was crucial to mandate the presumption of release for vulnerable categories of people, including L.G.B.T. people," Guttentag told me. A D.H.S. team, working with ICE, crafted a directive to speed the release of transgender detainees, as well as pregnant women, the elderly, and people with disabilities. One member of the team recalled meeting at D.H.S. headquarters with eight transgender women, who told "extremely wrenching" stories of abuse in detention. "That really accelerated our desire to get the directive through," the staffer said. The directive was ready to go by the eve of the 2016 Presidential election.

On Election Night, Guttentag had planned to toast Hillary Clinton at a bar on Capitol Hill, and then to welcome her immigration-policy transition team. When Trump won, Guttentag and his colleagues raced to push through their detention reforms. The Obama Administration would be in power for another seventy-three days. "The issue was gnawing at many of us," Carlos Guevara, a member of the D.H.S. team, recalled. "We had a new sense of urgency." Then, Guttentag got a call from a senior ICE official. "I'm sorry," he said. "We're not doing it." Guttentag stressed that the memo was ready to go. "That was before," the official said. "Now it's different."

In February of 2019, I travelled to El Salvador with my Columbia team, to cover the story of Camila Diaz Cordova, a twenty-nine-year-old trans woman who grew up in La Paz. When Diaz came out as trans, at seventeen, family members threatened her with violence. She fled to the capital, San Salvador, and began living with two older trans women, Monica and Virginia; they called themselves the Three Musketeers. Since 1993, more than six hundred L.G.B.T.+ people have been murdered in El Salvador, almost always with impunity, according to COMCAVIS Trans, an activist group. In 2011, Monica was shot dead on a bus by gang members, and the police failed to investigate. Diaz endured several brutal beatings by the police. In 2015, she fled to Mexico, but, in Tapachula, she barely survived an attack by a group of men with clubs. In 2017, she sought asylum at the California border, carrying photographs from a time that gang members had broken her jaw. "That was the only card she had left to play," Virginia told me.

Diaz was transferred to a private detention facility in Otay Mesa, California. "Please, put me on the women's side—I'm a woman," she told the guards. They laughed. "You're a man," one said. Officials took away her bra and gave her men's boxer briefs. Paola, a trans woman who arrived in detention with Diaz, told me, "We thought in the U.S. they didn't discriminate, but we saw the crude reality." The pair faced daily taunts from guards and other detainees: "You're a freak"; "You're a sin." Diaz was forbidden a razor, so her facial hair began to grow. "Look at your beard," a guard said. "You really think you're a woman?" (ICE did not respond to requests for comment on Diaz's case.)

In the cafeteria, Diaz told Paola that she was growing desperate. She went before a judge three times. In the first hearing, she asked, "How long will I need to be detained?" The judge explained that the only people who could release her in the next six months were ICE officials. In a second hearing, Diaz explained her fears of returning to El Salvador. "There's a high rate of assassinations," she said. But she also described the pain of remaining in detention: "Lately, I've been feeling depressed." At the next hearing, Diaz announced that she was withdrawing her case, and wished to leave detention. "Are you no longer afraid to return to El Salvador?" the judge asked. "I have fear," Diaz said, but she couldn't endure detention. "I wake up at midnight, and I'm very scared." She preferred to be sent home. "How long will it take?" she asked.

Virginia welcomed her back to San Salvador with a white cake topped with peaches. Worried about Diaz's depression, she took her to bathe in a local river, and cooked her favorite food, tomato salad with cilantro. As a trans woman, Diaz struggled to find legal work, so she earned a living as a sex worker. She faced constant threats from the police. On the night of January 30th, she texted Virginia to say that she feared for her life. That night, she was kidnapped by police, handcuffed, beaten, and tossed from a moving vehicle. Virginia found her in a morgue in San Salvador. A group of friends escorted her body to her home town in La Paz. "She'd been rejected by her family, but she was loved by the family she'd made," Virginia told me.

Guttentag was shaken by Diaz's story. "To hear the devastating consequences of detention, so starkly, for someone under circumstances we were trying to address, that's very difficult," he told me. Since Diaz's death, Virginia has been living in hiding and pushing, with a group of activists, to hold Diaz's killers accountable, while fighting for trans rights in El Salvador. Last summer, three of the police officers involved were found guilty of murder and sentenced to twenty years in prison—the first known convictions for the homicide of a transgender person in the country's history. "Camila's biggest dream was freedom—the freedom to be who she was," Virginia told me. "And now she is just another name on the list."

As the Immigration Policy Tracking Project gained momentum, Guttentag recruited law students at Stanford to join the team. Eventually, it included more than seventy students and fifteen immigration experts. Computer programmers funnelled the

THERE IS NOTHING QUIETER

Than softly falling snow
Fussing over every flake
And making sure
It won't wake someone.

—*Charles Simic*

changes from the Trackers' database into a sleek, password-protected Web site with an interactive time line; users could search it by date, agency, and other key details. I focussed my review on the asylum system, to which the team logged ninety-six changes.

The consequences of these changes weren't always self-evident. Last year, the government made it more difficult for asylum seekers to obtain work permits. Jennifer Anzardo Valdes, of Americans for Immigrant Justice, in Miami, told me that, as a result, "we're going to see young people enter into dangerous situations to survive, situations in the underground economy that subject them to labor or sex trafficking." Other entries in the Tracker had clear stakes. In 2019, U.S. Border Patrol began having law-enforcement agents, rather than trained asylum officers, conduct "credible fear" interviews. "It's been one thing after another," Michael Knowles, the president of a local union that represents asylum officers, told me afterward. "Our officers' heads are spinning. They aren't sleeping. They come to me in tears."

As Hannah Flamm dug into the case of Maria, the fourteen-year-old asylum seeker from Honduras, she realized how many Trump-era changes had affected the girl's life. I tallied at least half a dozen, upon reviewing hundreds of pages of legal records. "If Maria had reached the border before Trump came to office, there's no question she'd be an asylee today," Flamm told me. "She'd be a high schooler with legal status. And she would never have been separated from her mother."

Maria grew up in La Ceiba, a port city in Honduras. Her family called her Chicken Wing, for her favorite food. Her mother, Gabriela, volunteered in politics. Her father, a shopkeeper, worried that his wife's work would provoke the ire of local criminal groups, and insisted that political recruiters leave his family alone. Gabriela later denounced the politicians, earning enemies on all sides. One December morning in 2016, Maria's father stepped out for his morning cigar, and a gunman in a car opened fire. Maria ran outside to find her mother cradling her father on the porch, as he bled to death. Two years later, Maria's teen-age sister, Paulina, a grocery-store clerk, was kidnapped and sexually tortured by a group of men. A Honduran police officer sat on the bed and watched. The men flashed photographs of Maria and Gabriela, threatening that they would be next. After Paulina's escape, Gabriela knew that she had to go North with her girls. "I didn't know what else to do to save my daughters," she told me.

On September 15, 2019, they reached the southern border. Because Paulina was eighteen, she was sent to a detention facility and then swiftly deported to Honduras. Maria and her mother were shuttled into the Migrant Protection Protocols. The program, engineered in part by Stephen Miller, rerouted asylum seekers to makeshift camps in Mexican border cities, many of which are controlled by cartels. Maria and Gabriela went to Matamoros, where a dirt plot was crowded with tents. The State Department has ranked the security of Tamaulipas, where Matamoros is located, as comparable to that of wartime Syria, and Human Rights First has documented more than thirteen hundred incidents of rape, kidnapping, and other attacks against families waiting in the program. During Donald Trump's Presidency, an estimated seventy thousand people were pushed into the Migrant Protection Protocols.

The camp was so crowded that some mothers slept sitting up, their children in their laps. "One Honduran woman saw us crying and offered us a spot of soil under her palm tree," Gabriela recalled. The stranger showed her how to forage through the trash for cardboard boxes to convert into beds. At night, cartel operatives circled the camp, looking for migrants to kidnap for ransom. "The food is ready!" they shouted, pretending to be aide workers. Desperate to find a safer place to stay, Gabriela and Maria rented a cheap apartment in Matamoros, though, Gabriela told me, "the gangs sell drugs and girls there like caramels." One evening, two men followed Maria and Gabriela to a grocery store. They hid in an aisle of boxed milk and tortillas until the men left.

After four months, Maria and Gabriela arrived, at 5 A.M., at a border checkpoint, where officials escorted them to an asylum hearing. The immigration judge, Shelly Schools, a recent Trump appointee, appeared on a video screen. She questioned Gabriela for two hours, according to a recording, then took a recess to "look at the law." When Schools returned, she said, "If there was some legal way I could provide you protection in the United States, I certainly would try." But granting asylum had grown more difficult. Trump's Justice Department had aggressively used a strategy known as "self-referral" to take back cases from the Board of Immigration Appeals and issue alternative rulings. In a case called Matter of A.B., Attorney General Jeff Sessions overruled a well-established decision affirming the ability of gender-based-violence survivors and gang victims to win asylum; he deemed their suffering to be "private violence," rarely meriting protection.

Gabriela noted that a police officer had been involved in Paulina's assault, another detail that strengthened their case for asylum, but Trump's Board of Immigration Appeals had narrowed this protection, too.

"Do you know if this officer was involved in sexually assaulting your daughter personally?" the judge asked.

"He was watching as she was being raped," Gabriela replied.

"Do you know if the police officer

"He's much happier now that I'm working remotely and always at home."

• •

ever touched your daughter himself?" the judge asked.

"He only watched," Gabriela said.

The judge said that her hands were tied. "The death of your husband and the kidnapping of your daughter are certainly serious events," Schools said. "However, the harm did not occur to either of you." In any case, Maria and Gabriela had passed through Guatemala and Mexico on their way to the U.S. A Trump-era policy, called the "transit bar," required them to request asylum in those countries first, making them ineligible in the U.S. "I'm very sorry for what has happened to your family," Schools said. "I hope you can find a safe place to live." Gabriela feared that Maria wouldn't survive in Matamoros. One morning, at 3 A.M., she led Maria to a bridge that crosses the Rio Grande into Texas. "It's O.K., Chicken Wing," she said. Then Maria walked across.

When Trump issued the so-called "Muslim ban," thousands of people raced to airports in protest, chanting, "Let them in!" and "Shame!" But after public outcry faded, the Trackers logged dozens more barriers to refugee resettlement, enacted with less fanfare. According to a former White House communications aide, Miller had once said, "I would be happy if not a single refugee foot ever again touched American soil." The White House later said this wasn't "the policy of the Administration." Yet Miller nearly got his wish. In 2016, Obama approved a hundred and ten thousand yearly slots for refugees. By 2020, the Trump Administration had slashed that number to eighteen thousand, failed to fill even two-thirds of those slots, and then slashed it once more, to fifteen thousand. I spoke to more than a dozen refugees who suffered physical or sexual harm as a result of being stuck in the resettlement pipeline.

In 2018, I met Sam, a fifty-six-year-old former elementary-school teacher from Fallujah, Iraq, who became an interpreter for an Army Reserve unit stationed there in 2003. The Army had prepped Allen Vaught, the captain who commanded the unit, with a handful of lessons in Turkish instead of Arabic. He relied on Sam and four other interpreters, whom he paid five dollars a day. Sam went on raids against insurgents and uncovered a local plot to sell poisoned cigarettes to U.S. troops. "I would go anywhere, and do anything," he told me.

Vaught was hit by an I.E.D. later that year, and sent back to the U.S., where he received a Purple Heart. When he got home, he tried to secure the safety of his interpreters, who were often targeted by insurgents for their perceived disloyalty. (Sam asked to be called by his Army nickname, for his safety.) One of the interpreters was admitted to the U.S. in 2007, and lived briefly in Vaught's guest bedroom; he is now a U.S. citizen. Another arrived soon afterward with his family, after escaping several attempted assassinations. "Of the five translators I hired, two were executed, and we got the other two out," Vaught told me. "That leaves Sam. He was too loyal, and he stayed too long."

As Sam was returning from work one evening in 2004, gunmen pulled up in a car and fired at him with AK-47s. "I felt the heat of a bullet pass my ear, and I played dead," he said. The next day, someone threw two explosives through the window of his home. He moved to Baghdad, but militiamen there threatened his life. In 2014, he fled to Cairo and wrote to Vaught, who pledged to help him and his wife and daughters resettle in the U.S. "You can have a job on my cattle ranch," Vaught told him, adding that Sam's wife could work at his wife's fashion boutique. The Obama Administration had pledged to aid interpreters who'd supported U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, but,

even then, the vetting process was exhaustive—fingerprints, biometric scans, interviews—and often excruciatingly slow. Finally, a month before Trump took office, Sam was contacted by the International Organization for Migration, which helps manage resettlement, telling him that he would soon be leaving for the U.S. Vaught's wife sold T-shirts that read, "Humanity Isn't Lost in Translation," setting aside the profits so that Sam would have pocket money upon his arrival.

After Trump issued the Muslim ban, in 2017, temporarily halting refugee resettlement, Sam grew nervous. But in October came good news: he was told to prepare for his flight to the U.S. "This is major happiness," he told his lawyers. Later that month, Trump issued a lesser-known order called "Resuming the United States Refugee Admissions Program with Enhanced Vetting Capabilities," which purported to end the ban on resettlement of refugees like Sam but introduced onerous vetting requirements. "They're still rechecking our loyalty after all this?" Sam asked. Vaught couldn't sleep. "I'm the one who got Sam into this," he told me. Another former officer, desperate to help Sam, researched how to "extract" a refugee from Egypt and bring him to the U.S., hoping to commission a ship for the job. (Sam had no inkling of the plot.) That November, Vaught and Sam signed on as plaintiffs in a lawsuit against Trump's recent order, filed by the International Refugee Assistance Project. Two days before Christmas, a federal judge enjoined the order. "Sam should be wheels up soon," Vaught announced on Facebook.

But in January, 2018, an official asked Sam to provide the address of every home where he'd lived for more than thirty days in the past ten years, and the phone number and e-mail address of every close relative. The delay, as far as Sam could tell, was now the point. That summer, Reuters reported that a special program for refugees who had helped U.S. troops or other allies had admitted only forty-eight people, with a backlog of a hundred thousand. "The extra vetting isn't presenting any meaningful new information on security threats," Becca Heller, the director of IRAP, told me. "It's designed like an M. C. Escher drawing, a cycle you can follow forever but never complete."

On a smoggy afternoon, in 2018, I met with Sam at a dimly lit restaurant in downtown Cairo, which a friend had said would be safe. Sam lived in fear of deportation, and rarely ventured out. Just as a waitress arrived, a uniformed Egyptian officer sat down at the table beside us. Sam leaped from his chair and whispered, "We have to go." We rushed outside. "I haven't left my house in a year, and now this!" he said. "I'm illegal! I'll be deported to Iraq!" He told me that one day, earlier that year, when he went out for a loaf of bread, a car had pulled up, and two men—Egyptian police, he believes—hopped out and pulled him into the vehicle. The men interrogated him, rifled through the receipts in his wallet, stole his money and his phone, and pushed him back into the street. "I thought they'd kill me," Sam said.

We ventured up to my hotel-room balcony overlooking the Nile, which glittered with passing party boats. Sam lit a cigarette, then pulled out a blue folder of case materials that he'd been hiding beneath his vest. It included "Achievement" certificates and photographs from his days with the U.S. military. A "loyal and valuable asset," one letter, from an Army colonel, read. "Quick to point out dangerous areas that would jeopardize Soldiers' lives," another said. Sam rolled up his khaki pants to show me shrapnel embedded in his calf, from the attempt on his life in 2004. "I keep my evidence close," he said.

As dusk fell, Sam became worried again; walking at night would be risky. He gathered the folder and stuffed it beneath his vest. "In Iraq, I was like an amulet," he said. "I kept every soldier I worked with safe. But now my life is lived in a prison."

In February, 2020, IRAP reached a settlement with the government, slating Sam and some three hundred others for swift resettlement. "It's my moment of deliverance!" Sam told his wife. Then the pandemic struck, and the government stopped refugee resettlement, leaving Sam stranded in Cairo. He tried to maintain hope, studying the stars from his roof, and listening to Frank Sinatra. In July, resettlement began again, but Sam is still waiting for his security check to be completed. His medical clearance has expired, so he'll have to re-start that process if the vetting is ever finished. "They want me to lose hope, but I won't," he told me. "I'm not a criminal. I'm a veteran."

Last February, I joined Guttentag and a group of new Trackers around a big wooden table at Stanford Law School. Danny Martinez, Guttentag's research assistant, passed out Girl Scout cookies, turned off the lights, and projected the Trackers' time line onto an enormous screen from his laptop. (His charger read, "I am my ancestors' wildest dreams," a nod to his family's migration from Mexico.) On the time line, hundreds of red dots represented each Trump-era regulation that the team had logged. In some months, the dots were scattered and faint; elsewhere, they formed dense clusters. Then Martinez pulled up the master spreadsheet, which included a description of each new policy, the verbatim text of the change that had been made, tags marking the agencies and the issues involved, and a copy of whatever norms had come before it. "I know it's dizzying," Martinez told the new members, who squinted and leaned in close. After the presentation, one student raised her hand, and admitted, "The spreadsheet didn't make that much sense to me." Others laughed in agreement.

"That's a good sign," Guttentag said. "If it did, I'd be worried about you." Part of the challenge of tracking the Administration's regulatory overhaul, Guttentag explained, was the byzantine nature of the work. "We're aggregating and distilling and organizing the public record," he said.

The students were eager to see their work lead to political change. "Will we ultimately make this public?" another asked. Yes, Guttentag promised. "People need to see what in the world has happened." The goal was "addressing and undoing the horrific policies that have been put into place since January, 2017." He acknowledged that reverting to the regulations of the Obama years would be insufficient; many in the group knew that the Obama Administration had locked up asylum seekers in family detention centers, sped unaccompanied

children through immigration court without attorneys, and presided over a record three million deportations. Still, he said, "we hope a reform agenda can start off where the country was before the Trump Administration came in."

When the pandemic struck, Guttentag holed up in his home office, near Berkeley, overlooking a lemon tree, and watched to see how the Administration would respond. COVID-19 arguably justified certain border restrictions. Early on, Trump issued an order known as the China Ban, which barred entry from China for most non-citizen travellers, and, soon afterward, issued similar bans for Iran and much of Europe. By mid-March, Guttentag had e-mailed several Trackers, instructing them to pay careful attention to how the Administration might use the pandemic as a pretext for anti-immigration regulations. On March 23rd, the government announced that it would postpone all hearings for asylum seekers in the Migrant Protection Protocols program, leaving thousands of families in limbo.

Three days earlier, the C.D.C. had issued an even more alarming policy, called "Order Suspending Introduction of Certain Persons from Countries Where a Communicable Disease Exists." The order tossed out decades of congressionally mandated humanitarian protections; immigration agents were instructed to pursue immediate "expulsion," for the sake of public health. It made little epidemiological sense: the Administration wasn't blocking the travel of truck drivers, those commuting for educational purposes, or most citizens and legal permanent residents. The order drew on quarantine laws dating as far back as 1893, intended to prevent the spread of diseases such as smallpox and yellow fever. When Guttentag examined the history of the original laws, he found that the new regulation contradicted their intent. (In the drafting of the 1893 law, a senator from Wisconsin had argued that the word "immigrants" should be changed to "all passenger travel," pointing out that U.S. citizens could also carry diseases. "I think it ought not to be an authority which discriminates," he said.)

Border agents soon began using the rule to conduct clandestine "expulsions." They held asylum seekers and undocumented border crossers in secret hotel rooms, facilitated by government contractors, and then deported them without due process. According to the A.C.L.U., the government expelled at least two hundred thousand people in this manner, including thirteen thousand unaccompanied children. In McAllen, Texas, the Texas Civil Rights Project staked out a Hampton Inn & Suites hotel where immigrant children and others were being stashed, outside normal legal protocols, and then expelled. One of the nonprofit's attorneys, Andrew Udelsman, entered the hotel, and began to walk the halls, calling out offers of legal representation, as a colleague filmed. Three burly private contractors accosted him. "Get out, if you're smart," one said. Another violently shoved Udelsman into a hotel elevator. A Texas Civil Rights Project employee named Roberto Lopez photographed the hotel's windows, where adults cradling children held handwritten messages up to the glass. "We need your help," one read. "We don't have a phone," read another. The next day, the organization filed a suit, arguing that the system was "arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to law."

"O.K., let's see this 'giant spider.'"

On Election Night, 2020, asylum seekers and refugees around the world tuned in to the media coverage, knowing that their fates were tied to swing-state ballots. Sam, in Cairo, cooked himself a chicken, and sat glued to CNN. Gabriela, Maria's mother, watched in Mexico. "We need a miracle," she told me. Hannah Flamm, Maria's lawyer, said, "If Biden can undo even a fraction of the harm this Administration has done, it will totally transform Maria's case, and her life." Dozens of migrants at the camp in Matamoros gathered to pray. When the press called the race, some asylum seekers chanted, "Biden! Biden! Biden!" A small crowd of migrants, including one in a Grim Reaper getup, paraded beside a wagon stuffed with a piñata-style figure of Trump, dressed, according to Valerie Gonzalez, in *The Monitor*, in "clothing left behind by migrants who abandoned their asylum claims under the prolonged Trump administration policies." Serenaded by a song that went, "Fuck your mother, Donald Trump!," they set the effigy ablaze.

The Biden Administration has already wielded its executive authority to undo some of Trump's policies. Biden's acting head of D.H.S., David Pekoske, paused some deportations for a hundred days, and suspended Trump-era enforcement policies, pending a closer review. (Less than a week later, the attorney general of Texas challenged the moratorium, and a judge agreed to a temporary halt.) With a Democratic

Congress, Biden may have a shot at passing his immigration-reform bill. But reversing the subtler changes will take endurance, particularly amid so many other priorities. Don Moynihan, a professor of public policy at Georgetown, told me, "You basically need someone who is as knowledgeable and enthusiastic about reversing administrative burdens as Stephen Miller was about constructing them."

Last September, Guttentag was asked to join Biden's transition team as a volunteer adviser on immigration. Before he did, he shared a vision with his Trackers for how to use the database to help determine which policies to target first. "I think about future change in quadrants," Guttentag had told me. "If you draw a graph"—and he began doing so, on a scrap of paper—"the x-axis is the greatest impact for the greatest number of people, and the y-axis is the level of ease, or difficulty, when it comes to making the change." Some measures can be undone with a single, swift executive action. Others will require a drawn-out legislative battle, or a formal rule-making process. Some may have steep political costs. "We need to find the low-hanging fruit—the stuff that's really important to change, and really easy," he said. But he cautioned that, if you've never been inside an Administration, "you don't always anticipate how hard the y-axis is."

According to Guttentag's Tracker, more than a hundred of Trump's immigration policies are currently subject to litigation. Courts recently blocked the asylum ban, as well as dozens of other Trump efforts that were deemed "arbitrary and capricious." Biden can settle many of these lawsuits. "If you reach a good settlement agreement or consent decree, it can be a really effective way to make sure that the most egregious harms don't happen again," Jaya Ramji-Nogales, a professor at Temple Law School, told me. In 1997, Janet Reno, Bill Clinton's Attorney General, settled a decade-old lawsuit filed by an unaccompanied minor from El Salvador, and created the Flores settlement, in which the government agreed to swiftly release children from immigration detention and place them in "the least restrictive setting" possible. Under Obama, advocates leaned on Flores as a tool for fighting family detention, and, under Trump, it proved crucial to winning the release of children who'd been taken from their parents at the border. During the pandemic, the existence of Flores underpinned the argument that Maria, at Abbott House, should be released to her cousin while her lawyers fought her removal.

Some policies fall in the bottom right corner of Guttentag's graph: extremely high-stakes, but difficult to unravel. During Biden's campaign, he promised to end the Migrant Protection Protocols on his first day in office, noting that migrants in Mexican border towns face "a horrifying ecosystem of violence and exploitation." He has now asked for time to sort out what to do. D.H.S. has announced the end of new enrollments in the program, but has not resolved what will happen to the thousands who remain stranded. Some of Biden's advisers fear the political consequences of having thousands of asylum seekers coming into the country after Biden's Inauguration, particularly amid the pandemic. Conservatives have warned of a "caravan" of COVID-infected migrants, and nicknamed the President No Borders Biden. But a new generation of immigrants'-rights activists plan to keep the pressure on. "We need a bold and completely different direction," Greisa Martinez Rosas, of United We Dream, told me. "We need Biden to prioritize the true safety of immigrant communities, because the forces that enabled Donald Trump to rise to power aren't going away."

In politics, the status quo has uncanny power. In 2008, during Obama's first Presidential campaign, he promised to close Guantánamo Bay. On the night that he won, detainees at Guantánamo chanted, "Obama! Obama! Obama!"; defense lawyers paraded before military prosecutors in a conga line, singing, "Hey hey hey, goodbye!" Obama issued an executive order on his third day in office, calling for Guantánamo's closure within a year. But he was soon fighting with Congress, which passed legislation that made transferring detainees to the U.S. difficult, and engaging in tense negotiations with foreign countries about their willingness to accept prisoners. Toward the end of his second term, Obama was asked, by a seventh grader, if he had any regrets. "I would have closed Guantánamo on the first day," he said. "The path of least resistance was just to leave it open."

Today, Guttentag hopes that the minutiae won't be forgotten. Later this month, he will make his Tracker public. He hopes that it will provide a useful model for reversing Trump-era policies in other sectors of the government as well. At Harvard Law School, a team has created a "Regulatory Rollback Tracker," to log the ways in which Trump eroded environmental regulations. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has inventoried dozens of assaults on civil rights. "To undo the damage, we'll have to keep getting deeper and deeper into the weeds," Guttentag told me. "That's where so much of the change still needs to happen."

Maria, in Miami, knows that her fate depends, in part, on how quickly Biden transforms asylum policy. Noemi Samuel Del Rosario, a lawyer at Americans for Immigrant Justice, which is working with the Door to fight Maria's removal, told me that she hopes Biden will go further than ending the Migrant Protection Protocols; he also, she said, "needs to right the wrongs for families like Maria's, who didn't get a fair chance to present their cases in the way they should have in the first place." Maria's mother, Gabriela, is in hiding. Her sister, Paulina, is on the run in Honduras. "My wish is to eat around the same table as my family," Maria told me. She still has the sketch of the pink hibiscus flower that she drew on the night that ICE came for her at Abbott House. She kept her journal from the facility, too, in which she did an exercise envisaging her life ten years in the future. She imagined herself as a lawyer, in a pink suit, fighting for immigrant kids in court. "I'm proud of all that you've been able to achieve," she wrote. "I see you as a woman warrior." ♦

ANNALS OF GEOGRAPHY

PROMISED LAND

A young climate activist is creating maps to help the Catholic Church combat global warming.

BY DAVID OWEN

In the summer of 2016, Molly Burhans, a twenty-six-year-old cartographer and environmentalist from Connecticut, spoke at a Catholic conference in Nairobi, and she took advantage of her modest travel stipend to book her return trip through Rome. When she arrived, she got a room in the cheapest youth hostel she could find, and began sending e-mails to Vatican officials, asking if they'd be willing to meet with her. She wanted to discuss a project she'd been working on for months: documenting the global landholdings of the Catholic Church. To her surprise, she received an appointment in the office of the Secretariat of State.

On the day of the meeting, she couldn't find the entrance that she'd been told to use. She hadn't bought a SIM card for her phone, so she couldn't call for help, and, in a panic, she ran almost all the way around Vatican City. The day was hot, and she was sweating. At last, she spotted a monk, and she asked him for directions. He gave her a funny look: the entrance was a few steps away. A pair of Swiss Guards, in their blue, red, and yellow striped uniforms, led her to an elevator. She took it to the third loggia of the Apostolic Palace, and walked down a long marble hallway. On the wall to her right were windows draped with gauzy curtains; to her left were enormous fresco maps, commissioned in the early sixteenth century, depicting the world as it was known then.

Burhans has been a deeply committed Catholic since she was twenty-one. For a year or two, when she was in college, she considered becoming a nun. Later, though, as she grew increasingly concerned about climate change, her ambitions broadened, and she began to think of ways in which the Catholic Church could be mobilized as a global environmental force. "There are 1.2 billion Catholics," she told me. "If the Church were a country, it would be the third most populous, after China and India." The Church, furthermore, is probably the world's largest non-state landowner. The assets of the Holy See, combined with those of parishes, dioceses, and religious orders, include not just cathedrals, convents, and Michelangelo's Pietà but also farms, forests, and, by some estimates, nearly two hundred million acres of land.

Burhans concluded that the Church had the means to address climate issues directly, through better land management, and that it was also capable of protecting populations that were especially vulnerable to the consequences of global warming. Some researchers have estimated that drought, rising sea levels, and other climate-related disasters will drive two hundred million people from their homes by 2050; many of those people live in places—including some parts of Central Africa, the Amazon Basin, and Asia—where the Church has more leverage than any government. "There is no way that we will address the climate crisis or biodiversity loss in any sort of timely manner if the Catholic Church does not engage, especially with its own lands and property," Burhans said. "At the end of the day, I'm more subordinate to my ecclesiastical authority than I am to my government authority. You can see that kind of sentiment even in non-Catholics, like Martin Luther King, Jr.—sometimes you have to default to a greater good." What if desecration of the environment were a mortal sin? Could faith accomplish what science and politics have not?

In the spring of 2015, Pope Francis presented "Laudato Si'," a forty-thousand-word encyclical on reckless consumerism, ecological degradation, and global warming. In the Book of Genesis, God gives man "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth"; in "Laudato Si'," Francis interprets "dominion" as something like moral responsibility, and writes that the earth "now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." He calls for the replacement of fossil fuels "without delay," and demands that wealthy countries be held accountable for their "ecological debt," which they have accumulated by exploiting poorer countries. Shortly after "Laudato Si'" was published, Herman Daly, an environmental economist and professor emeritus at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy, wrote that Francis "will be known by the enemies this encyclical makes for him," among them "the Heartland Institute, Jeb Bush, Senator James Inhofe, Rush Limbaugh, Rick Santorum." (Daly could have included the libertarian commentator Greg Gutfeld, who, while discussing "Laudato Si'" on Fox News, characterized Francis as "the most dangerous person on the planet.")

Burhans was in graduate school, studying landscape design, at the time. She described "Laudato Si'" to me as "one of the most important documents of the century," but she also said that, not long after Francis presented it, she discovered that the Church had no real mechanism for achieving its goals. "The Catholic Church is the world's largest non-government provider of health care, humanitarian aid, and education," she said, "and I assumed that it must have a significant environmental network, too." She identified a number of ecology-focussed Catholic groups, mostly in wealthier parishes, but no central organization that she could join—no Catholic Sierra Club or Nature Conservancy, no environmental

The role of the cartographer, according to Molly Burhans, is not just data analytics. "It's also storytelling," she said.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISABEL MAGOWAN

equivalent of Catholic Relief Services.

In September of 2015—four months after the publication of "Laudato Si'," and a few weeks after she received her master's degree—she founded Good-Lands, an organization whose mission, according to its Web site, is "mobilizing the Catholic Church to use her land for good." Burhans's immediate goal was to use technology that she had become proficient at in graduate school—the powerful cartographic and data-management tools known as geographic information systems (G.I.S.)—to create a land-classification plan that could be used in evaluating and then managing the Church's global property holdings. "You should put your environmental programs where they mean the most, and if you don't understand the geographic context you can't do that," she said.

The first step was to document the Church's actual possessions. She began by making telephone calls to individual parishes in Connecticut, where she lived. "And what I found out was that none of them knew what they owned," she told me. "Some of them didn't even have paper records." She enlisted volunteers, including several graduate students at the Yale School of the Environment, and, by harvesting data from public land records and other sources, they began to assemble a map of the modern Catholic realm. By June of 2016, the most detailed reference they'd found was a version of "Atlas Hierarchicus," published at the behest of the Vatican. The maps in it had last been updated in 1901. "The diocesan boundaries in the atlas were hand-drawn, without a standardized geographic projection," Burhans told me, and the information was so outdated that most of it was unusable. When she travelled to Rome that summer, her main goal was to find someone in the Vatican who could give her access to the Holy See's records and digital databases, enabling her to fill in the many gaps.

In the Office of the Secretariat of State that day, Burhans met with two priests. She showed them the prototype map that she had been working on, and explained what she was looking for. "I asked them where their maps were kept," she said. The priests pointed to the frescoes on the walls. "Then I asked if I could speak to someone in their cartography department." The priests said they didn't have one.

Centuries ago, monks were among the world's most assiduous geographers—hence the frescoes. But, at some point after the publication of "Atlas Hierarchicus," the Church began to lose track of its own possessions. "Until a few years ago, the Vatican's Central Office of Church Statistics didn't even have Wi-Fi," Burhans said. "They were keeping records in a text file, in Microsoft Word." In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI lifted the excommunication of Richard Williamson, a British bishop who had been convicted by a German court of promoting Holocaust denial. When the announcement provoked outrage, Benedict explained that he hadn't known about Williamson's past remarks. "People said, 'Why didn't you just Google the guy's name?'" Burhans told me. "And they were, like, 'We don't have Google.'"

At the end of her meeting with the priests, Burhans asked whether they would mind if she continued to gather information on her own, since they didn't have what she was looking for. "They spoke in Italian for five or ten minutes," she recalled. "I was thinking,

THIS IS NOT A POEM

in which the poet discovers
delicate white-parched bones
of a small creature
on a Great Lake shore
or the desiccated remains
of cruder roadkill
beside the rushing highway.

Nor is it a poem in which
a cracked mirror yields
a startled face,
or sere grasses hiss-
ing like consonants
in a foreign language.
Family photo album
filled with yearning
strangers long deceased,
closet of beautiful
clothes of the dead.
Attic trunk, stone well,
or metonymic moon
time-travelling for wisdom
in the Paleolithic
age, in the Middle Kingdom
or Genesis
or the time of Bashō….

Instead it is a slew
of words in search
of a container—
a sleek green stalk,
a transparent lung,
a single hair's curl,
a cooing of vowels
like doves.

—Joyce Carol Oates

Can you be excommunicated for asking a question?" As an obedient Catholic, she would have felt compelled to abandon her entire project if they had said no. "But they didn't say no," she told me. "In the end, they said, 'Yes, that would be useful for everything.'" She thanked them, and told them that she would be back.

Burhans was born in New York City in 1989. Her mother, Debra, is a professor of computer science at Canisius College, in Buffalo. Her father, William, who died in 2019, of prostate cancer, was a researcher in molecular oncology. As a young girl, Burhans was passionate about drawing and about her family's Macintosh computer. At six, she taught herself to use Canvas, an early program for graphics and desktop publishing, and then Dreamweaver and Flash. When she was in high school, her father and his colleagues paid her to create graphs and illustrations in Photoshop for their scientific papers—a nerd's equivalent of babysitting money. Her main interest, however, was always ballet. She began taking lessons when she was five, and by the time she was in high school she was practicing several hours a day, six days a week.

She enrolled at Mercyhurst University, in Pennsylvania, in 2007, intending to major in dance, but she withdrew in the fall of her sophomore year, among other reasons because she had suffered a debilitating foot injury, and because she had walked in on a student who was trying to kill herself. She returned to her parents' house, in Buffalo, and, after a period of dejection, became involved in the city's arts community. She took advantage of a policy at Canisius that allowed the children of faculty members to study tuition-free. She eventually majored in philosophy, but she also studied science, mathematics, and art. She told me that in high school she'd been so focussed on ballet that she was never much of a student; now she devoted herself to academics with the same intensity that she'd once devoted to dance. She spent six months travelling, by herself, in Guatemala, where she volunteered with several N.G.O.s. "What I learned there is that land is a critical vehicle not only for food security and ecosystem support but also for helping people in rural poverty get out of poverty," she said. She was surprised by some of the friends she made. "They were Christians, but not like the Christians you see on TV—none of the prosperity gospel crap," she said. "In fact, exactly the opposite. I began to think, Maybe I'm a Christian."

Burhans's family was nominally Catholic. She had attended a parochial school through third grade, and Mercyhurst and Canisius are both Catholic institutions. But when she went to church as a child, she said, "I'm pretty sure I was only in it for the doughnuts." When she was twelve, the Boston *Globe* published its "Spotlight" articles about child abuse by priests. She said her feelings about the Church, which had been "not spiritually mature," turned angry and hostile. "Here was this institution that had perpetuated colonialism, and now it was hiding a bunch of pedophiles."

At Canisius, though, she experienced a spiritual awakening. She was working on a physics problem one day, thinking about limits and infinitesimal values, and suddenly she felt overwhelmed. "The Jesuits talk about seeing God in all things, and you can see God in all things through the infinite," she said. She began meeting regularly with a Jesuit spiritual director, who introduced her to the Examen of St. Ignatius, a demanding daily prayer exercise, which she described to me as "mindfulness on steroids."

As Burhans became interested in Catholicism, her social life changed. "I no longer had people to listen to John Cage or Frank Zappa with," she told me. Her new friends were "middle-class suburban campus-ministry members who liked belting Disney songs." She had no real regrets, though, because she had "fallen in love with God." She took classes in Greek, so that she could read the New Testament in its original language, and she read works by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, who, during the Great Depression, founded the Catholic Worker Movement, a network of pacifist, communitarian groups that were dedicated to living in poverty and aiding the poor. She got two tattoos: one, on her forearm, of a bicycle with three wheels arranged in a triangle (symbolizing her interest in both the Holy Trinity and low-carbon transportation), and one, on her right shoulder, of the third line of Whitman's "Song of Myself"—"for every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."

During her time at Canisius, Burhans spent a week on a service retreat at a monastery in northwestern Pennsylvania, and she was struck that the resident Sisters were doing almost nothing with their property other than mowing its immense lawn. "There were many acres of forest, but, at that time, there was no forest plan, no erosion plan, no invasive-species plan," she said. "And I thought, Wow, this could be done better. They could be doing sustainable forest management and earning revenue, or they could implement a permaculture farming system and actually feed people."

In 2013, the summer before she graduated, she saw an advertisement on Facebook for the Conway School, a ten-month master's degree program in ecologically minded landscape design, in Conway, Massachusetts. The school was founded, in 1972, by Walter Cudnohufsky, a Harvard-trained landscape architect, who believed that conventional graduate programs in his field were too theoretical and insufficiently collaborative. She decided that the Conway program might enable her to combine her interests in design, conservation, and morally responsible land use, and prepare her for her ideal occupation, which she thought might be "nun farmer" or "nun park ranger."

There were seventeen students in Burhans's program at Conway. The youngest had just earned an undergraduate degree in architecture; the oldest had worked for nearly a decade as a product designer at Tupperware and Rubbermaid and wanted to make a career change. During the second half of

Burhans realized that the Church had lost track of its vast landholdings.

the program, each member of the class was given a student license for ArcMap, a G.I.S. program created by a company called Esri. The purpose of G.I.S. is to make complex information easier to understand and analyze, by organizing it geographically and in multiple layers. In 1854, during a cholera epidemic in London, the English physician John Snow created a simple forerunner of G.I.S. by marking the locations of individual cases on a street map, thereby tracing the source of one neighborhood's outbreak to a particular public well, around which the dots clustered. Snow's map was easy to understand, and it identified not just the problem but also the solution.

Modern G.I.S. software can provide the same kind of clarity, but for vastly larger quantities of data, much of it not obviously geographical. Immense data sets can be analyzed individually, or they can be merged to reveal ways in which they interact. G.I.S. has been behind the news for much of the past year, because the digital systems that health officials and medical personnel around the world are using to track the novel coronavirus are almost all built on G.I.S. platforms. The software makes it possible to plot COVID-19 cases in relation to factors such as income levels, school-district boundaries, and the locations of healthcare facilities. "You can see where the medical supplies are and who has comorbidities and who has health insurance, and you can see that in areas where people don't own cars you need testing sites within walking distance," Burhans told me. "If you put all that information in tables or graphs, it would be overwhelming. But the second you get it into a spatial relationship you can see what you have to do."

Burhans said that the day she opened ArcMap was one of the best days of her life. "Most of my classmates were swearing at their computers, because the program is really hard," she said. "But I just knew how it worked. It was like someone had put my brain in a piece of software." At Canisius, she had supplemented the course materials in a science class by diagramming biological systems, in stackable layers, on an outline of the human body—cell types, germ layers, the endocrine system, the cardiovascular system. G.I.S., she said, combined categories of information in a similar way, but with digital geospatial data rather than with body parts.

Conway students worked exclusively with real clients. Burhans was part of a team assigned to an environmental group in Portland, Maine, which wanted to plant pollinator-friendly vegetation on undeveloped land in the city. She told me, "My reaction was that a project like that, however well intentioned, might simply be creating ecological sinks—where you plant just enough to lure pollinator species into the city but not enough to support their full life cycle. So I found all these meta-analyses of habitat conditions—for insects and for some birds. Like, how far can they go to the next forage patch—is it four feet, four metres, forty metres?" She incorporated data about topography, solar radiation, drainage, and shade cast by buildings, as well as the names and addresses of the owners of every undeveloped parcel in Portland. "I created a rudimentary but useful program," she continued. "And what I saw, all of a sudden, was that there were these potentially robust habitat corridors that went all the way through the city, and that if you followed them you actually could support pollinators without creating sinks." For the final version she drew illustrations.

Paul Hellmund, Conway's director at the time, described Burhans's pollinator work to me as "mind-blowing." Her ArcMap instructor was Dana Tomlin, a visiting lecturer, who teaches

G.I.S. at both Yale and the University of Pennsylvania, and who was the originator of a field in cartography known as map algebra. He told me, "With Molly, it was like the child who finds the musical instrument that's right for them, and thereby becomes a master at it." Burhans said that, as she worked on the project, she felt several of her interests come together, like layers in G.I.S.: computer science, conservation, art—even dance, since managing data sets in ArcMap felt like choreography.

It was while she was at Conway that Burhans decided her original career goal had been too narrow. Instead of reforming the land-use practices of a single convent or monastery, she thought, why not use G.I.S. to analyze all Catholic property holdings, and then help the Church put them to better use? She met the historian Jill Ker Conway, who owned a house nearby (but who, despite her name, had no connection to the school). Conway was the president of Smith College between 1975 and 1985, and in 2013 she received a National Humanities Medal from President Obama. She invited Burhans to tea one afternoon, and "pulled the entire idea for GoodLands out of me," Burhans said.

Conway, who died in 2018, introduced Burhans to a mentee of hers, Rosanne Haggerty, who had worked with Brooklyn Catholic Charities in the nineteen-eighties and won a MacArthur Fellowship in 2001 for creating housing for the homeless in New York City. When Burhans graduated, in 2015, she had very little money, and Haggerty invited her to live, rent-free, in a house that she and her husband owned, in Hartford, Connecticut. Burhans stayed, on and off, for two years—without ever unpacking, because she worried that she was imposing. She created much of GoodLands, on her laptop, in Haggerty's son's former bedroom.

GoodLands' first real office was a small room on the second floor of a two-story building in New Haven, overlooking the Quinnipiac River. I met Burhans there a little over a year ago. She was wearing a knee-length brown skirt, a blouse buttoned at the throat, and a gray cardigan sweater, all bought at thrift stores. The office contained a desk, a bank of file cabinets, and a couch, on which Burhans sometimes spent the night when she had worked late and didn't feel like riding her motor scooter back to her apartment, on the other side of the river. A brown paper grocery bag on the floor next to the couch contained her pajamas. Hanging on the wall above the desk was a copy, printed on a large sheet of plastic, of the first complete map that GoodLands made of the Church's jurisdictional elements. (The Church is primarily divided into episcopal conferences, provinces, dioceses, and parishes.) "Nobody had mapped this before," she said. "And one of the things you can see is that ecclesiastical boundaries don't always conform to modern geopolitical boundaries. The Seoul Diocese, for example, spans the border between North and South Korea."

Early on, Burhans got a huge break when someone familiar with her work at Conway described her pollinator project to Jack and Laura Dangermond, the founders and owners of Esri, the publishers of ArcMap. Jack Dangermond first began exploring computer-mapping software in 1968, in a research lab at Harvard. He and Laura started Esri three years later, with a small loan from Jack's mother. Today, their company employs forty-five hundred people worldwide and has annual revenues estimated at more than a billion dollars.

The Dangermonds invited Burhans to Esri's headquarters, in Redlands, California, to explain the work she'd been doing with their program. At the end of that meeting, they gave her the enterprise version of their most sophisticated software—a huge relief to Burhans, because her student license had expired a few days before. They also offered her the equivalent of an open-ended fellowship, including unlimited access to the company's facilities and staff, and housing in a nearby apartment building that they owned. Burhans later worked for four months in Esri's Prototype Lab. The company's engineers helped her customize her software, expand her database, and create a detailed infrastructure plan.

Even so, Burhans told me, she spent the first three years after founding GoodLands "eating beans and crying." Almost all of the work she did, including a few projects for the Vatican, was pro bono, and, although she had received small grants from Catholic-friendly organizations, she could seldom afford even part-time help. It wasn't until 2016 that she hired her first paid intern: Sasha Trubetskoy, a statistics major at the University of Chicago, whom she had discovered on Wikipedia. Trubetskoy, for fun, had created a simple map of ecclesiastical provinces, using the open-source image-editing program GIMP. He told me, "Ecclesiastical provinces seemed like the last vestiges of the administrative structure of the Roman Empire, and I was surprised that the Catholic Church hadn't really mapped them." Many of Trubetskoy's boundaries were approximate, but he had collected information that Burhans had seen nowhere else. (Trubetskoy is now a freelance data scientist. His recent hobby projects have included mapping the road systems of Gaul and medieval Japan.)

Burhans unexpectedly acquired a significant missing piece in late 2016, while she was working without pay to map the property holdings and subsidiary branches of a global community of Catholic organizations. During a visit to one of its sites, she told some priests about her long-term plans—after dinner, over cognac—and one of them excused himself, returned to his room, and came back with a stack of printed materials that documented the diocesan boundaries in China, where he had served as a missionary. One of her most useful early resources was David Cheney, an I.T. specialist for the Internal Revenue Service, who had spent more than twenty years collecting, cataloguing, and digitizing all the information he could find about the worldwide Catholic Church. His database included statistics about individual dioceses as well as the names, postings, and birth dates of bishops, cardinals, and other Church personnel. Burhans incorporated it all.

A few weeks after Burhans and I met at the GoodLands office, I visited her in her apartment, a basement studio in an old building on a residential block dominated by a Polish

Catholic church. She called the apartment her hobbit hole. I entered through the kitchen, a narrow galley with scaled-down appliances on one side and coat hooks and a pair of cross-country skis on the other. There was a fireplace on the far side of the main room, and, against another wall, a single bed with a brightly painted folk-art crucifix hanging above it.

On a laptop, she showed me a high-resolution "green infrastructure" map of the United States that Esri engineers had created. The map incorporates vast quantities of data: topography, wetlands, forests, agriculture, human development—all of which can be explored, in detail, by zooming and clicking. Burhans had added her own data, about Catholic landholdings, and, by bringing those boundaries to the foreground and narrowing the focus, she was able to show me specific Church-owned parcels not far from where we were sitting which would be particularly valuable in any effort to preserve watersheds, habitats, migratory corridors, or other environmental assets. If Church leaders understood what they controlled, she said, they could collaborate with municipalities, government agencies, environmental N.G.O.s, and others, in addition to any efforts they might undertake on their own. "The role of the cartographer isn't just data analytics," she said. "It's also storytelling."

Burhans has used G.I.S. in Catholic projects unrelated to the environment, as well. GoodLands' first paid job was a "school-suitability analysis" for the Foundation for Catholic Education. That project, Burhans said, "had nothing to do with ecology, but the mission is a good one, and they were willing to pay us." The fee enabled her to hire contractors, who helped her use Esri software to map and analyze income levels, public-school quality, changing demographics, and other factors affecting the viability of independent Catholic schools in particular locations. "We were able to show them things like, If you close this Catholic school, you're going to abandon a lot of kids in an area that has a totally dysfunctional public-school system, and if you start a school here you're going to serve a lot of new families that don't have other options." The foundation became a repeat client, and for a while, she said, "I could eat organic beans."

In 2017, GoodLands mapped abuse cases involving Catholic priests, using data collected by an organization called Bishop Accountability. Historically, accused abusers have been allowed by Church officials to disappear into new assignments, including teaching positions in elementary schools. "It still happens that a priest is accused and then, instead of turning him over to the authorities, his diocese ships him to a different diocese—and often the new diocese is in a mission territory," Burhans said. Such transfers, like viral pandemics, can be fought partly through contact tracing—an obvious use for G.I.S. GoodLands tracked roughly four hundred and fifty accused priests and bishops, and showed how, with the help of the Church, they had avoided prosecution for years. On the maps and graphs that GoodLands created, you can follow an individual abuser from assignment to assignment, and you can click down through accusations, indictments, convictions, sentences, and press coverage. Burhans was also able to demonstrate that the number of cases dropped dramatically in dioceses in which formal policies to protect minors had been put in place, including requirements for notifying non-Church authorities about accusations. While working on a related project in 2019, she concluded that the Church could take a major step toward containing child abuse by clergy if it imposed such protective policies in just five critical episcopal conferences.

"The Vatican needs a room where they can have all this stuff on dashboards, so that they can actually check on it," she said. For-profit companies, N.G.O.s, government agencies, and defense departments all over the world depend on similar capabilities, for a huge variety of purposes. U.P.S. uses Esri software to design efficient routes for its drivers; Starbucks uses it to select sites for new stores ("Why do you think that whenever you need a coffee there just happens to be a Starbucks there?" Burhans asked me); the World Health Organization used Esri software in creating the plan that halted the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa in 2016, and W.H.O. representatives told the Dangermonds afterward that G.I.S. had been crucial to their success. "What Molly is trying to do is to digitally transform the Church, through spatial thinking," Jack Dangermond told me. "The issues the Church is facing are not unlike those faced by large corporations or the U.N."

The volunteer projects that Burhans undertook for the Vatican and various Catholic groups, including one in which she mapped all the Catholic radio stations in Africa, didn't improve her finances, but they earned her a reputation within the Church. In the fall of 2017, she was invited to take part in two Vatican conferences, one of which related to the mission of "Laudato Si'." She was pleased to go but worried about finding an affordable place to stay.

"I explained my problem to a member of the Vatican staff, and they said, 'Oh, just stay in the Domus"—a guesthouse next to St. Peter's Basilica—"cardinals do it all the time,'" she told me. "My room was on the floor below the Pope's apartment, and I'd see him at meals, in the dining room. There were cardinals from all over the world there, too, and I had my maps with me, on the table. The cardinals were all, like, 'We want copies of these.'" She had printed those maps on paper and canvas, partly because she assumed that printed maps would be easier than digital maps to demonstrate, especially to the Church's elderly prelates. Those maps would not have seemed remarkable to anyone outside the leadership of the Church. (Some of them were smaller versions of the big map I'd seen hanging over her desk.) But the cardinals were amazed. "They'd never seen the global Church before," Burhans said. She became known at the Vatican as the Map Lady.

In the summer of 2018, Burhans went to Rome again, for another conference, and had a chance to describe her project directly to the Pope. Two years earlier, when visiting the Vatican on her way home from Nairobi, she had met not just with the two priests in the Secretariat of State's

Paul and Audrey

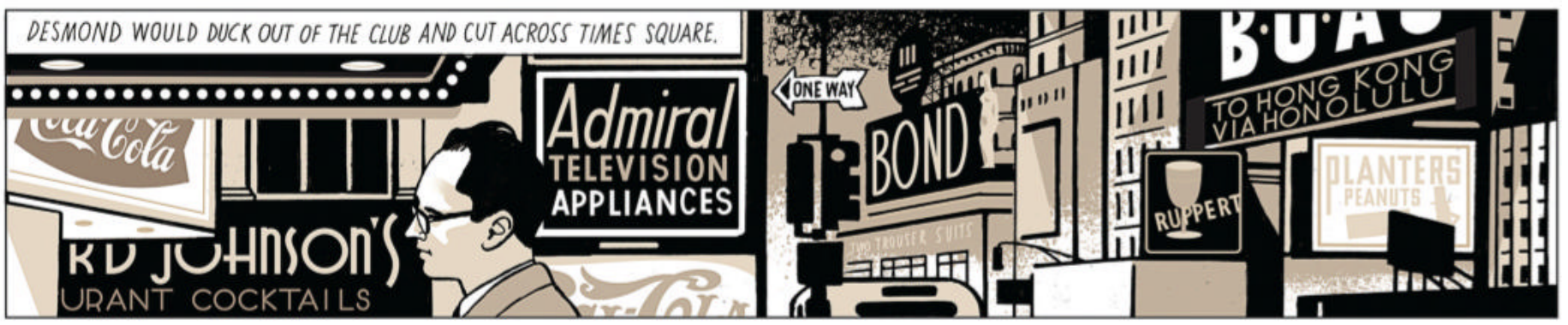
PAUL DESMOND WAS THE ALTO SAXOPHONIST IN THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET FROM 1951 TO 1967. HE WROTE "TAKE FIVE," THE GROUP'S BIGGEST HIT. HE HAD A LIFELONG CRUSH ON AUDREY HEPBURN, THOUGH THEY NEVER MET...

IN THE SPRING OF 1954, HEPBURN WAS STARRING IN "ONDINE," AT THE 46TH STREET THEATRE.

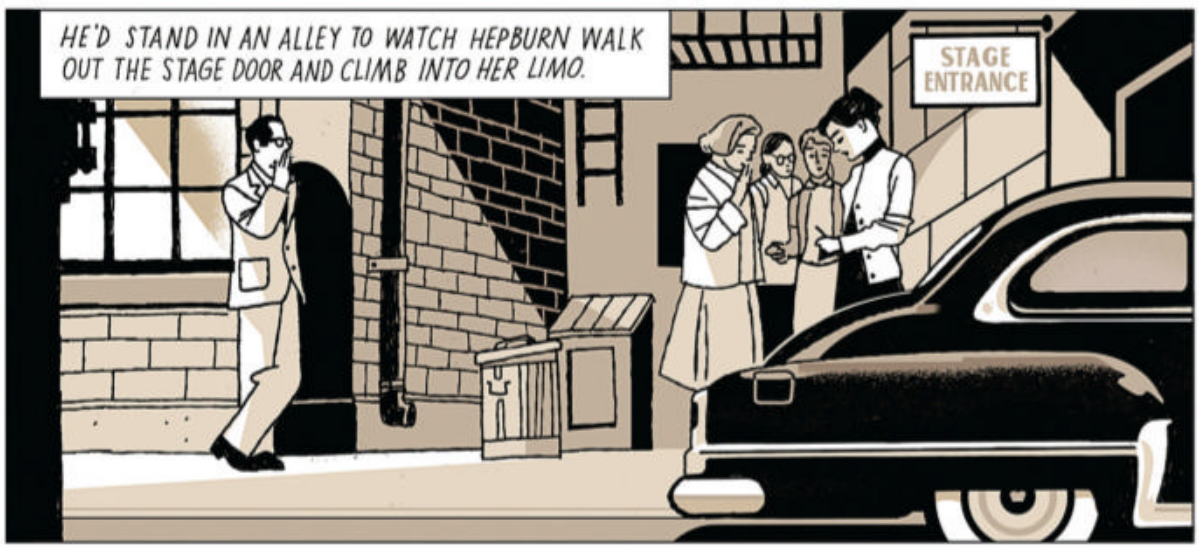
THE BRUBECK QUARTET WAS PLAYING AT BASIN STREET, A NIGHT CLUB A FEW BLOCKS AWAY.

EVERY NIGHT, PAUL ASKED BRUBECK TO CALL AN INTERMISSION AT THE SAME TIME.

DESMOND WOULD DUCK OUT OF THE CLUB AND CUT ACROSS TIMES SQUARE.

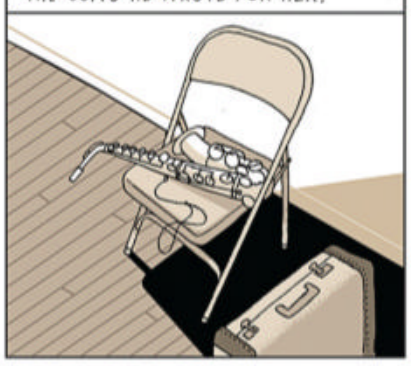


HE'D STAND IN AN ALLEY TO WATCH HEPBURN WALK OUT THE STAGE DOOR AND CLIMB INTO HER LIMO.



THAT YEAR, PAUL WROTE A SONG CALLED "AUDREY," WHICH APPEARED ON THE COLUMBIA RECORDS ALBUM "BRUBECK TIME."

DESMOND DIED FROM LUNG CANCER IN 1977. HE WAS SINGLE, AND NEVER KNEW WHETHER HEPBURN HAD HEARD THE SONG HE WROTE FOR HER.



WHEN HEPBURN DIED, IN 1993, HER EX-HUSBAND ANDREA DOTTI CALLED BRUBECK TO ASK IF HIS QUARTET WOULD PLAY "AUDREY" AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE AT THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS.

THIS TOOK BRUBECK BY SURPRISE.

"I HAD NO IDEA YOU'D BE AWARE OF 'AUDREY'..."

"MY WIFE LISTENED TO THAT SONG EVERY NIGHT BEFORE SHE WENT TO BED."

As told in "Take Five: The Public and Private Lives of Paul Desmond," by Doug Ramsey.

office but also with Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, of Ghana, who was one of the principal contributors to "Laudato Si'." Burhans told me, "I showed him my prototype, and we talked for an hour. He said that an early encounter with using maps for change was when he was a kid in Ghana and mining companies came into his village with their maps and took everyone's land."

When she met with the Pope, Turkson acted as her interpreter. She gave Francis a map that showed the percentage of Catholics in every diocese in the world, and explained how that map related to the bigger projects she envisioned. Francis seemed interested, she told me; he said that he had never seen anything like it. Still, their conversation was brief, and she didn't think anything would come of it. Shortly before she flew home, though, she received an e-mail saying that Francis was interested in establishing a Vatican cartography institute, on a six-month trial basis, with her as its head.

Burhans was elated: this would likely be the first female-founded department in the history of the Roman Curia. Still, she knew that she had to turn him down. The offer came with no budget, other than a small stipend for herself. "If I'd said yes, it would have been a total failure," she said. So she returned to the United States, and went to work on a blueprint for the kind of cartography institute that she believed the Church needed. When I first spoke with her, in late 2019, the United Nations had recently named her its Young Champion of the Earth for North America, a prize for environmentalists between the ages of eighteen and thirty. She was also working on a proposal for the Vatican which included a seventy-nine-page prospectus for a ten-month trial project, the cost of which she estimated at a little more than a million dollars. The prospectus included her outline for the environmental mission she believed the Church should undertake, as well as explanations (illustrated by interactive maps and graphs) of how G.I.S. could be used to support and coördinate other ecclesiastical activities, among them evangelization, real-estate management, papal security, diplomacy, and ongoing efforts to end sexual abuse by priests. She submitted her prospectus to the Pope's office, and booked a return to Rome for April, so that she could attend a conference and, she hoped, negotiate a final configuration for the cartography institute with Vatican officials.

A month before her planned trip back, Burhans travelled to California to give a talk in a lecture series at Esri and, among other things, to meet with officials of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, with whom she was discussing several projects, including one related to homelessness. (That archdiocese is a good example of the complexity of the relationship between Church property and the environment; its assets include twenty-one oil wells, which have produced fumes and pollutants over the years that have allegedly caused area residents to become ill.) I met Burhans in San Francisco, and we went to see David Rumsey, who made a fortune in real estate thirty years ago, then mostly retired and became one of the world's leading collectors of historical maps. Many of those maps are now stored at the David Rumsey Map Center, at Stanford University. In a private gallery in the basement of his house, he showed Burhans a recent purchase: an enormous three-volume atlas of Catholic dioceses, commissioned by the Vatican and printed in 1858. "This came to me from Amsterdam in a big box," he said.

"Wow," Burhans said. She opened a volume—bare-handed, because, Rumsey said, people who handle old books are clumsier when they wear gloves—and turned, at random, to a page showing the region that includes modern-day Israel and Palestine. The text was in Italian (Giudea, Arabia Petrea, Idumea Orientale), and the fourteen depicted dioceses were hand-colored, in half a dozen pastel shades. Most of the names and political boundaries shown on the map have changed since the eighteen-hundreds, but the existence of the atlas, Burhans said, demonstrated that the Church was once deeply committed to documenting the scope of its dominion—a precedent for GoodLands.

Burhans gave her talk at Esri on March 3rd. Six days later, Italy announced a national quarantine, and Burhans cancelled her trip to Rome. She flew back to Connecticut on March 16th. The plane was nearly empty, but a man sitting near her was perspiring heavily and coughing. On March 22nd, she noticed the first COVID-19 symptoms in herself.

She was sick for three months. Characteristically, she mapped her condition, in an interactive graphic containing more than six hundred and fifty points of medical data, organized in a dozen overlapping layers. Her COVID map documents her symptoms: a temperature that rose above a hundred degrees for weeks; a heart rate that spiked at more than two hundred beats per minute; a blood-oxygen level that occasionally fell below eighty per cent after physical exertion; more than a week without eating; the loss and restoration, twice, of her senses of taste and smell. The map contains a photo log of dermatological changes, the results of all her medical tests, and a day-by-day chronicle of her mental state. There are also screenshots of her Google search history: her memory was so impaired that she kept forgetting what she'd been thinking about. She was never admitted to the hospital or given supplemental oxygen, but doctors monitored her remotely. "At one point, a doctor sent an ambulance for me, to take me to the emergency room," she said. "I didn't think I was that sick, but when the E.M.T. saw me he looked like he was having a panic attack, and I thought I must be dying." Her COVID map is, in effect, a physiological information system. "If you did this for multiple patients and combined them," she said, "you might see that so-called 'long-haul' COVID is actually an underlying condition, or maybe it's some other festering infection, totally unrelated. It would be useful for differential diag-

nosis, because there's so much going on with this disease and so much that we don't know."

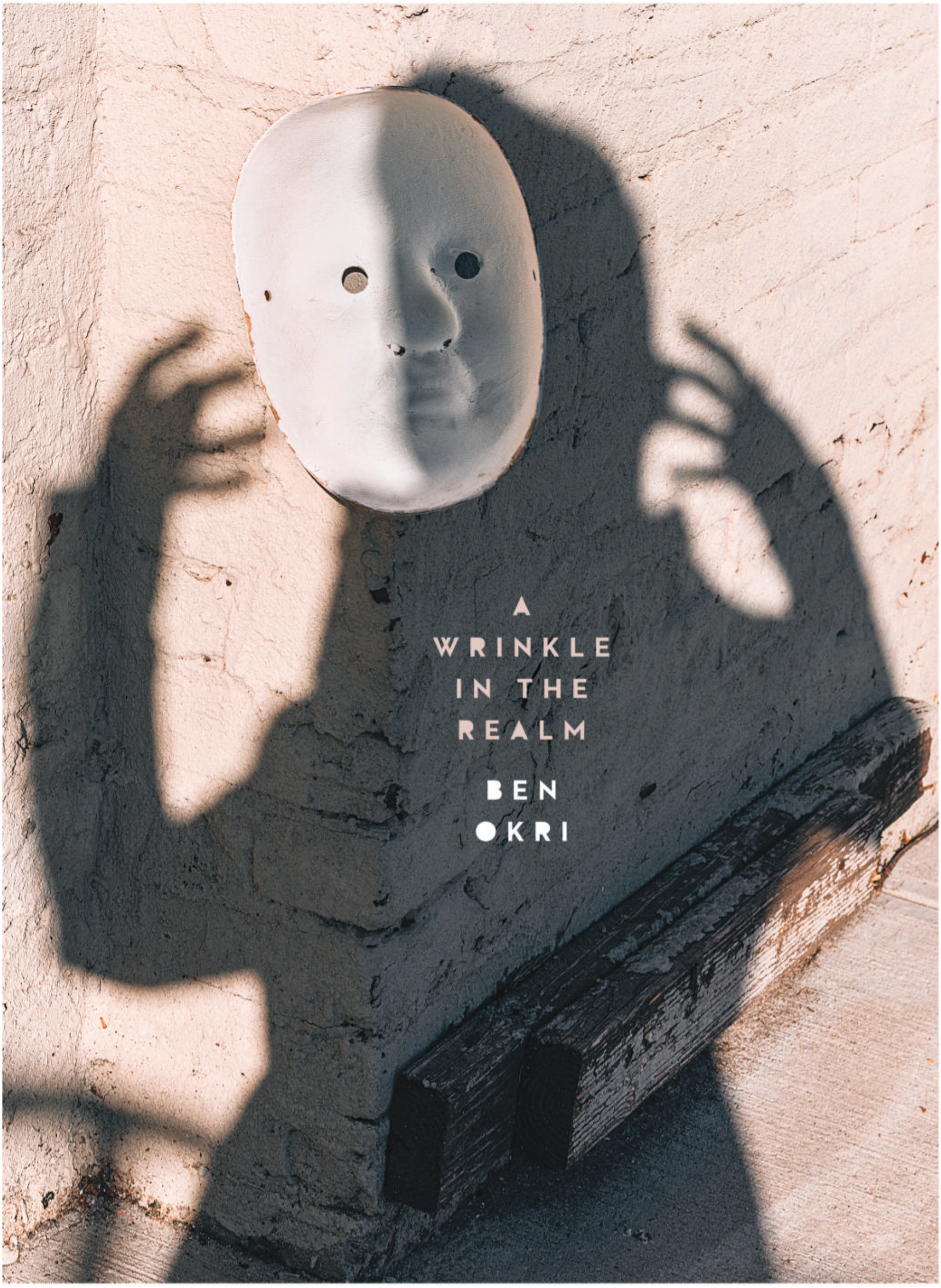
For the time being, the pandemic has almost certainly removed Burhans's cartographic institute from the agenda of anyone in the Holy See. One reason is that the Vatican's budget normally includes substantial revenues from its museums, which have been at least partly closed for almost a year. Another reason is that the pandemic has stressed Church operations at every level, from individual parishes on up. Many Catholic health-care facilities have been overwhelmed by virus cases, including some in the parts of the world where Catholic clergy and laypeople are principal dispensers of aid of all kinds. Burhans told me that, nevertheless, the pandemic has made the technological revolution that she envisages more important. "Data infrastructure is so unsexy that it's not a major issue for the Catholic Church or its donors, but it's absolutely critical," she said. She added that, if the Church mapped all the Catholic hospitals in the world, it could share the information with groups that could use it to make better decisions about health care. GoodLands is primarily an environmental organization, but Burhans's ultimate goal is to reform the Church's entire mode of operation: "They could save billions if they embraced this, as well as improving the world in every single ministry they do."

One of the Church's weaknesses in that regard has historically been one of its strengths: the fact that it has access to an immense pool of deeply committed but extremely inexpensive labor. This is why the Church has often seemed to be handicapped by a lack of expertise; its operations tend to be managed by Sisters and clergy, who are cheap and plentiful, rather than by people with lay experience and advanced degrees. "The Church's entire financial model does not work with people who need to feed children and send them to school and own a car," Burhans said. "This is a moral issue, too, because we see lay teachers at Catholic schools who can't afford to send their own kids to the same school." In his Easter letter last year, Pope Francis observed that the pandemic had hugely exacerbated economic stresses that were already being endured by people all over the world. "This may be the time to consider a universal basic wage," he wrote—advice that the Church has yet to apply to itself.

• • •

I last visited Burhans in August, after she'd recovered from COVID. She was living and working at a three-hundred-acre Catholic "educational and environmental association," about thirty-five miles northwest of New Haven. She had moved there temporarily, mostly so that she wouldn't have to spend any more time cooped up in her hobbit hole, where she had lived while she was sick. She had been given a large apartment on the second floor of the association's main house, and she had set up an office in what appeared to be an old sleeping porch. She had connected her computers to the association's Internet hub by running three hundred feet of Ethernet cable across rooms, along hallways, and down staircases. (Since then, the association has added Wi-Fi.)

Burhans is still in contact with officials at the Vatican, and she has faith that the Pope will eventually return to her proposal. "If the Vatican suddenly says yes, I'll drop everything and go," she told me. In the meantime, though, GoodLands plans to expand its mission to include lay clients, both for-profit and nonprofit: real-estate companies, asset-management firms, universities, land trusts, and similar organizations. She has turned away such clients in the past, but will do so no longer. "The same approach that we've used for Catholic properties can be used for other landholders," she said. "What we do has value for any large property owner who cares about the environment, and in order to scale this work we need to serve everyone." She isn't certain, yet, how to make all that happen. But she has ideas. ♦



A WRINKLE IN THE REALM

BEN OKRI

PHOTOGRAPH BY TOMMY KHA

The first time he realized that there was something not quite right about him was when a woman crossed the street as she saw him coming. He thought it was a coincidence. Then it happened again.

He began to watch those around him. One day, on the Underground, a woman three empty seats away moved her handbag to her other side when she saw him. He wasn't sure why.

After the fourth or fifth time something like that happened, he looked at himself in the mirror. He thought he was normal, like everyone else. But when he looked at himself through the eyes of those who clutched their handbags when they saw him he understood that his face was not as normal as he'd thought.

He couldn't see what was wrong with it, but the longer he looked the more certain he became. Something was wrong with him that he couldn't see. The mirror revealed aspects of his face that he hadn't noticed before. Which aspect made people cross the street to avoid him?

This troubled him so much that he was unable to sleep most nights. He wanted to talk to someone about it, but he couldn't think of anyone. When it was daylight, on his way to work, he looked nervously at people. He wondered when they would see him, and act on that seeing. But people hurried past without noticing him at all. This was as baffling as when they crossed the street. Why didn't they see him? He was purposefully looking at them, to see if they reacted to something strange in his face. But the more he looked the less they seemed to see him. The experience of being fled from at dusk, and not seen in daylight, struck him as a paradox.

After a while, he decided to test whether it was really him they were fleeing, and what it was about him that caused this reaction. He reasoned that, from a distance, at dusk, it is difficult to see the details of a person. Therefore, it had to be something about his shape, the way he moved through space, that made people want to avoid him. He concluded that it had to be the way he walked.

He experimented with different kinds of walks. He walked in a bandy-legged way. He made himself shorter and less threatening. He walked sideways, to be less conspicuous. All this only made people avoid him more. They crossed the street even sooner. One evening, he was going home from the small advertising firm where he worked. He made his way down his street, with its double row of plane trees. The trees took up part of the pavement, obliging people to go around them one at a time. He liked the trees on his street. Each one grew at a unique angle. They were the only things in the world that were good to him. They never judged him. When he went past, he always touched them.

The trees were big and silent now. He walked slowly. He saw the form of a woman far up the street and he made himself smaller. Then a man came in from a side street. The man, tall and a little bowlegged, walked toward the woman. What would the woman do? Would she cross the road at the sight of the man? Was it maleness that caused the fear? The man walked past the woman, who hadn't crossed the road. It wasn't maleness, then.

He wondered when the woman would notice him. What would she do when she did? At that moment, she looked up and saw him. Her body recoiled noticeably, and she hurried across the road.

He was hurt by this. He stopped and couldn't move, rooted in a nameless fury and shame. His mind was full of things he wanted to say to the woman. He wanted to say, "There's nothing wrong with me, you know," or "I'm not going to mug you," or "Do you think I am remotely interested in your body?" or "Why did you cross when you saw me and not when you saw the man in front of me, who looked much more dangerous?"

He had many things he wanted to say. The street was empty. It was getting dark. Then he did something that surprised him. He began to cross the street.

The woman saw him crossing. A look of alarm appeared on her face. She started to cross back. He followed. She didn't want it to be obvious that she was avoiding him, but she made one last effort not to meet him in the middle of the street. As he drew nearer, she opened her mouth in the beginnings of a scream. Just before he brushed past her, he said, "There's nothing wrong with me. I'm not going to eat you."

As he spoke he was aware of how it sounded. I shouldn't have said that, he thought.

Once he'd passed her, the woman, released from her terror, ran away at such a speed it was as if there were a demon chasing her. She made a strange noise as she ran. He watched her flee. His experiment had been inconclusive. He had learned nothing about why people avoided him.

That evening, his face looked different in the mirror. He had a regular face, with a bit of a beard, a prominent forehead, good strong lips. His jaw was a little pointy, his ears didn't stick out, and he had been told that he had nice eyes. His teeth were white. He had never smoked in his life.

But after his encounter with the woman something had changed. Something about his coloring and the general shape of his face had gone slightly awry.

The next day, he asked his mates at work if there was anything different about him. They looked at him and weren't sure. There *was* something different, they said, but they couldn't put their finger on what it was. He became obsessed with the idea that something about him had changed, and that the people who avoided him were responsible for that change. He was not sure how.

He went out of his way to avoid the gaze of others. Afraid that when people saw him they would take extraordinary pains to avoid him, he made sure not to encounter anyone in the street. When he saw people from far away, he would hide or turn his back to them and remain like that until they had passed.

At work, his behavior became so odd that people began to think him unhinged in some way. Those who had known him for a long time found it hard to believe. But his constant ducking when anyone looked at him, his reluctance to meet people's eyes, his frequent scurrying out of the way in corridors, which at first seemed comic, soon gave him a reputation for evasion that, with time, became a source of suspicion. Folks were puzzled by the way he'd suddenly disappear when looked at, by how he made himself as invisible as possible during meetings. They

didn't understand why he never attended the parties to which he was invited, or why he never lingered for a drink after work.

Often, people would catch him in the men's room scrutinizing himself in the mirror. Sometimes he could be seen contemplating his shadow. When he spoke to people, he always seemed to be hiding his face. Soon, people began remarking on how odd he looked, though no one had really got a good look at him for some time.

He never appeared in photographs anymore. If anyone turned a camera on him, he rushed off. Then he began to avoid mirrors. He was sure that the more he feared what he looked like the more he would become what he feared.

But what was he to do about people crossing the street to avoid him? How was he to carry on with the stress of being avoided, the negation of being shunned? The anxiety crippled his daily journey home. When he got to his street, with its double line of plane trees, fear would grip him, a fear of the eyes of others. He sometimes wished that he could become invisible, so that he wouldn't have to endure the shame of seeing people flee from him.

Then, one day, it occurred to him that if he wore a mask he would be freed from these anxieties. It seemed an elegant solution. There was a stall that sold masks in the local market on Sunday mornings. He looked at many different masks. Most of them, too outlandish, he rejected out of hand. What he needed was a mask that was as much like a normal human face as possible.

He bought seven and tried them out at home. He took care to put them on before looking in the mirror. Of the masks, five seemed useful. He felt that the best way to choose the most normal-looking one would be to try it out in the office and on the walk home.

At work, no one seemed to recognize him. He was stopped at the reception desk, but when he gave proof of his identity he was allowed upstairs. His colleagues balked at his appearance. When he sat at his desk, they asked if it was him. When he replied that it was, they stared. Then they began to whisper. He was summoned to his boss's office.

"What are you playing at?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Why are you wearing a mask?"

"It's done out of consideration for others. My face troubles people, sir."

The boss studied him.

"You call this consideration?"

"Yes, sir. At least people know better who I am."

"Do they?"

"I think so. And, what's more, I can let them look at me. I don't mind being looked at with the mask on."

"But it's frightening. How do we know it's you? If everyone came to work with a mask on, life would be impossible."

"Let's try it for a week, sir, and see."

Each day, he wore a different mask. Each day, the response was the same. The manager called him into his office. By the end of the week, the manager had had enough.

"You might need to see someone," the manager suggested.

"It will all be resolved next week," he said.

"Either you see someone or we'll have to fire you."

"But why, sir?"

"You are scaring everyone. You make it hard for people to do their work."

"It will be sorted out next week," he promised.

Every day that week, his walk home had confirmed the efficacy of the masks. On the first day, women who normally would have fled across the street when they saw him now only stared at him as he went past. On the second day, a woman began to cross but changed her mind and stayed on the same side of the street, perhaps out of curiosity. By the fifth day, none of them noticed him.

This surprised him. He was certain that the masks made him look unnatural. Why were those who normally fled from him bothered by his face but not by the mask?

He took the question to the man who sold masks at the local market on Sunday mornings.

"You never told me what you were buying them for," the man said. As if to advertise the power of the masks he sold, the man wore a mask himself. On this day, he was in an Aztec mask that delighted the children as they went past. Many people stopped to buy his impressive disguises. "Now that you've told me the problem, I believe I have the best mask for you. There is one condition, though."

"What's that?"

"For the first week that you wear it, you must believe that the mask is your face."

"Is that all?"

"That's all. It's simple."

The man took him to the back of the stall, where he stored the vast quantity of masks he had acquired from all over the world. The man asked him to shut his eyes. Then the man put a mask on him and told him not to look in the mirror for a while. The man refused to charge him.

"You did me a favor. Because of you, all these people stopped at my stall. They must have been drawn here by your face, eh?" the man said, laughing.

When he got home he was curious, but he did not look in the mirror. By morning, the mask had fused with his face. He touched his cheek and felt no mask on it. He had no need to look in the mirror.

At work, everyone stared at him in wonder. The manager called him into his office and gazed at him for a long time, then sent him back to his desk without uttering a word. On the walk home, he was so preoccupied with the unusual reaction of his co-workers that he forgot to notice whether people crossed the road to avoid him. Near his house, a pretty young woman stopped him to ask for directions. She was lost. He gave her clear instructions and wished her well.

At the end of the week, one of the women in the office, a beautiful woman with long legs and fierce lipstick, who worked in the digital department, asked him what he was doing for lunch, but he didn't get the hint.

He no longer noticed his own mask, but he began to see the masks of others. When he walked home in the evenings, he wondered why he had never noticed them before. Now that he did, he saw that it was necessary to avoid them and he crossed the street before it was too late. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Ben Okri on perception and illusion.

BOOKS

ZERO DAY

Hacking the whole world.

BY JILL LEPORE

In the nightmare, sirens caterwaul as ambulances career down ice-slicked, car-crashed streets whose traffic lights flash all three colors at once (they've been hacked by North Korea) during a climate-catastrophic blizzard, bringing pandemic patients to hospitals without water or electricity—pitch-black, all vaccinations and medications spoiled (the power grid has been hacked by Iran)—racing past apartment buildings where people are freezing to death in their beds, families huddled together under quilts, while, outside the darkened, besieged halls of government, men wearing fur hats and Kevlar vests (social media has been hacked by Russia), flashlights strapped to their rifles, chant, "Q is true! Q is true!"

"SOMEONE SHOULD DO SOMETHING," reads the T-shirt worn by one of Nicole Perlroth's sources, a hacker from New Zealand, in "This Is How They Tell Me the World Ends: The Cyberweapons Arms Race" (Bloomsbury). Someone should. But who? And do what? And about which of the Biblical plagues facing humankind? Perlroth is a longtime

Cyberattacks make headlines and then vanish, but once the weapons are unleashed everyone remains at risk.

ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN DJOB NKONDO

cybersecurity reporter for the *Times,* and her book makes a kind of Hollywood entrance, arriving when the end of the world is nigh, at least in the nightmare that, every night, gains on the day.

Perlroth is interested in one particular plague—governments using hacking as a weapon of war—but her book raises the question of whether that's the root of a lot of other evils. For seven years, Perlroth investigated the market in "zero-days" (pronounced "oh-days"); her book is the story of that chase, and telling that story, which gets pretty technical, requires a good bit of decoding. "A zero-day is a software or hardware flaw for which there is no existing patch," she explains. Zero-days "got their name because, as with Patient Zero in an epidemic, when a zero-day flaw is discovered, software and hardware companies have had zero days to come up with a defense." A flaw can be harmless, but zero-days represent vulnerabilities that can be turned into weapons. And, as Perlroth demonstrates, governments have been buying them and storing them in vaults, like so many vials of the bubonic plague.

It's tempting to say either *I can't worry about this right now* or *Didn't we already know this*? For all the sensationalism of "This Is How They Tell Me the World Ends"—not least the title—much here fails to surprise: all code has bugs; it's virtually impossible and prohibitively expensive to write perfect code; and bad actors can exploit those bugs to break into everything from your iPad to the Hoover Dam. Companies and governments therefore pay hackers to find bugs, so that they can be fixed, or exploited. *What other choice do they have*? you ask. Perlroth's reply is *It's a lot worse than you think* and *If there aren't other choices, it's time to invent some*.

Perlroth's storytelling is part John le Carré and more parts Michael Crichton—"Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" meets "The Andromeda Strain." Because she's writing about a boys' club, there's also a lot of "Fight Club" in this book. ("The first rule of the zero-day market was: Nobody talks about the zero-day market. The second rule of the zero-day market was: Nobody talks about the zero-day market.") And, because she tells the story of the zero-day market through the story of her investigation, it's got a Frances McDormand "Fargo" quality, too; in one sequence, Perlroth, pregnant, questions Italian hackers in Miami bars. (They tell her that they live by a samurai code of honor. "*Bushido*, I thought. *More like Bullshit*," she writes.) Reading how Perlroth found out about what's going on is spellbinding, but it can obscure what happened when. Here, as I read it, is that sequence of events, the spell, unbound.

In the nineteen-sixties, computers, which had been used to store and process information, became communications devices. "Life will be happier for the on-line individual," J. C. R. Licklider, the visionary behind ARPANET, predicted in 1968. But, for all the benefits this development would bring, it struck many people as having unknowable effects—"What all this will do to the world I cannot guess," the head of Bell Labs wrote that year—and it struck other observers as potentially quite dangerous. Also in 1968, the Pentagon's Defense Science Board Task Force on Computer Security concluded that "contemporary technology cannot provide a secure system in an open environment." In a follow-up report from 1972—the year ARPANET was publicly demonstrated, at the D.C. Hilton, during the first-ever meeting of the International Conference on Computer Communication—the lead author, James P. Anderson, argued that communication by computers offered a "unique opportunity" for espionage and sabotage; virtually undefended and "totally inadequate to withstand attack," computers were "a uniquely attractive target for malicious (hostile) action," and, because of the growing connections among computers, a single attack could take down an entire network.

American intelligence agencies had long preferred offense to defense. As Perlroth writes, "Unimaginable volumes of nation-state secrets—previously relegated to locked file cabinets—were suddenly being transmitted in ones and zeroes and freely available to anyone with the creativity and skill to find them." In the nineteen-seventies, in a project run jointly by the U.S. Navy, the National Security Agency, and the C.I.A., divers placed a tap on a Soviet cable on the ocean floor north of Japan; they leeched information out of it until the breach was discovered, in 1981. Two years later, the French Embassy in Moscow discovered that the Soviets had bugged its teleprinters. Then, in 1984, an N.S.A. project that involved taking apart and replacing every single piece of electrical equipment in the American Embassy in Moscow discovered an almost undetectable bug in the Embassy's I.B.M. Selectric typewriters: a single extra coil on the power switch, containing a miniature magnetometer. Every tap of every key was being collected and communicated by radio.

Meanwhile, computer programs got longer and longer, from tens of lines of code to tens of millions, controlling ships and airplanes and missiles. American intelligence agencies began to consider the possibility of catastrophic breaches.

"I finally got the popcorn kernel out of my molar, so my schedule just opened right up."

In the nineteen-eighties, Jim Gosler, working for the Adversarial Analysis Group at Sandia National Laboratory, pioneered research in detecting vulnerabilities in computer code (in this case, in the code that controlled the nuclear arsenal). As Perlroth argues, Gosler demonstrated that the code was "at once a hacker's paradise and a national security nightmare." In 1989, the N.S.A. brought Gosler onboard as a "visiting scientist." In 1996, he took over the C.I.A.'s Clandestine Information Technology Office. His role seems to have been to explain to people at Fort Meade and, later, at Langley that no computer and no computer program can ever be faultless, an argument with implications for both defensive and offensive operations. Between his two appointments, the Internet opened to commercial traffic, and people throughout the world started uploading and downloading. Perlroth, interviewing Gosler about how dangerous all this is, looks down at her iPhone: "And yet here we were, entrusting our entire digital lives—passwords, texts, love letters, banking records, health records, credit cards, sources, and deepest thoughts—to this mystery box, whose inner circuitry most of us would never vet, run by code written in a language most of us will never fully understand."

In the dot-com nineties, cybersecurity firms sold antivirus software; penetration-testing companies sold the service of breaking through your firewall, to show you how they got in. ("We Protect People Like You from People Like Us" is the motto of one pen-tester.) They all peddled an amalgam of fear, uncertainty, and doubt that, in the tech world, had come to be abbreviated as FUD. Some of those private companies realized that it wasn't efficient to maintain a big staff of analysts when they could just pay bounties to hackers all over the world to figure out how to break into a system. Governments and intelligence agencies, too, started offering bounties for bugs, paying hackers, brokers, and, above all, defense contractors. Some of these companies, like the Miami-based "100% offensive" Immunity, Inc., and the Maryland-based Vulnerability Research Labs (which was acquired in 2010 by a giant defense contractor), are staffed with ex-intelligence agents, selling zero-days that are worth millions of dollars. After 9/11, the price for bugs went through the roof. With the launch of Google, and especially of Facebook, the amount of data to be found online mushroomed, and so did the ease of government surveillance. Perlroth writes, "It was often hard to see where the NSA's efforts ended and Facebook's platform began." Only the arrival of the iPhone, in 2007, proved a greater boon to government surveillance.

Cyberattacks made headlines, and then vanished. In 2008, Russia got into a network at the Pentagon; hackers broke into the campaigns of both Barack Obama and John McCain; the next year, North Korea compromised the Web sites of everything from the Treasury Department to the New York Stock Exchange. In 2010, a computer worm called Stuxnet, created by the U.S. and Israel in an operation approved by George W. Bush and continued by Obama, was discovered to have devastated Iran's nuclear program. Perlroth, who started covering cybersecurity for the *Times* a year later, is arguing that, if you build a worm like that, it's eventually going to come back and eat you. When the worm escaped, Joe Biden, then the Vice-President, suspected Israel of hastening the program, and breaking it. "Sonofabitch," he allegedly said. "It's got to be the Israelis." It infected a hundred countries and tens of thousands of machines before it was stopped. "Somebody just used a new weapon, and this weapon will not be put back in the box," Michael Hayden, a former N.S.A. director, said. That somebody was the United States. It had built a boomerang.

The market for zero-days became a global gold rush. You could buy zero-days from anyone, anywhere; no rules obtained. "When it came to zero-days, governments weren't regulators," Perlroth writes. "They were clients." After Chinese hackers attacked Google in 2010, the company started paying bounty hunters a maximum of $1337 a pop (the numerals spell out "leet," short for "élite," on your phone); soon, that got bumped up to $31,337 ("eleet"). Microsoft and other major players offered encryption services, which had the effect of raising the price of zero-day exploits. In 2013, the *Times* called Perlroth into a windowless closet in the office of Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the publisher, to pore over the documents leaked by Edward Snowden. She was supposed to study attempts by the world's top intelligence agencies to crack digital encryption but saw that "the NSA didn't need to crack those encryption algorithms when it had acquired so many ways to hack around them"—that is, by zero-days. "The agency appeared to have acquired a vast library of invisible backdoors into almost every major app, social media platform, server, router, firewall, antivirus software, iPhone, Android phone, BlackBerry phone, laptop, desktop, and operating system."

Then there are all the mercenaries. Perlroth reports that, in 2015, a company named Zerodium offered a million dollars for a chain of zero-days that could break into an iPhone remotely; in 2019, Google offered $1.5 million for a way to gain remote access to an Android device. Some of those mercenaries are Americans, who sell zero-days to foreign governments. In 2015, a former N.S.A. hacker, David Evenden, was part of a team that gained access to Michelle Obama's e-mails on behalf of the United Arab Emirates while he was working for a contractor called CyberPoint: Evenden got in touch with Perlroth to share his story, and to warn other former N.S.A. employees to be careful if they worked for foreign companies.

If it was hard to get people in the know to talk on the record about the zero-day archive, it was harder to get people in power to understand its danger. Perlroth points out that the practice of paying hackers to figure out ways to break into other countries' power grids, weapons systems, transportation infrastructure, and the like by way of holes in Adobe Reader or Firefox or a fitness app was an extension of pre-digital modes of warfare—the way you'd, say, bomb a bridge or take out a munitions factory—that simply no longer apply. During the Cold War, Perlroth writes, "Americans spied on Russian technology, while Russians backdoored American typewriters." No more. Instead, people across the world use Microsoft and Google and iPhones. "Increasingly, NSA's work was riddled with conflicts of interest and moral hazards," Perlroth argues:

> Nobody seemed to be asking what all this breaking and entering and digital exploitation might mean for the NSA's sponsors—American taxpayers—who now relied on NSA-compromised technology not only for communication

but for banking, commerce, transportation, and health care. And nobody apparently stopped to ask whether in their zeal to poke a hole and implant themselves in the world's digital systems, they were rendering America's critical infrastructure—hospitals, cities, transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, oil and gas, defense; in short, everything that undergirds our modern lives—vulnerable to foreign attacks.

In 2012, Iranian hackers using a version of the Stuxnet worm destroyed the data of thirty thousand computers used by a Saudi oil company. That year, Republicans in the Senate filibustered a law that would have required American companies to meet minimum cybersecurity regulations. Two years later, North Korean hackers attacked Sony. (As Perlroth observes, the press coverage mainly concerned gossip that was found in Sony executives' e-mails, not North Korea's ability to hack into American companies.) Russia, in the same period, was "implanting itself into the American grid," hacking into systems that controlled basic infrastructure, from pipelines to power switches. By 2015, Russians were inside the State Department, the White House, and the Pentagon. The hackers didn't turn things off; they just sat there, waiting. Beginning in 2014, in anticipation of the 2016 election, they fomented civil unrest through fake Twitter and Facebook accounts, sowing disinformation. They broke into the computers of the Democratic National Committee. As with the Sony attack, the press mostly reported the gossip found in the e-mails of people like John Podesta. All the while, as Perlroth emphasizes, Russian hackers were also invading election and voter-registration systems in every state in the country. Donald Trump's response, once he was in office, was to deny that the Russians had done anything at all, and to get rid of the White House cybersecurity coördinator.

In the spring of 2017, still unknown hackers calling themselves the Shadow Brokers infiltrated the N.S.A.'s zero-day archive, a box of digital picklocks. They walked into the cyber equivalent of Fort Knox, and cleaned the place out. But it was worse than that, because they stole cyberweapons, the keys to the kingdom. By the next month, hackers from North Korea were using some of those picklocks to break into the computer systems of, among other places, British hospitals, German railways, Russian banks, a French automaker, Indian airlines, Chinese universities, the Japanese police, FedEx, and electrical-utility companies all over the United States. The attack, which was accompanied by ransom demands, came to be called WannaCry. The cost to tech companies, Perlroth reports, was in the tens of billions of dollars.

One month later, Russia tried out its kill-the-grid attack on Ukraine. It could have been much worse were it not for the fact that most of Ukraine's systems are not online. "What had saved Ukraine is precisely what made the United States the most vulnerable nation on earth," Perlroth observes. Every second, Americans plug into the Internet a hundred and twenty-seven devices, from refrigerators and thermostats to library catalogues and bicycles. During the pandemic, the infrastructures of testing, care, and vaccination development and distribution have all been attacked, in what amounts to a cyber pandemic. In March, 2020, as the federal government first began to frame a response to COVID-19, hackers attacked the Department of Health and Human Services. That spring, hackers started attacking hospitals around the world that were treating coronavirus patients, shutting down thousands of computers with ransomware. In October, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a new division within the Department of Homeland Security, tweeted, "There is an imminent and increased cybercrime threat to U.S. hospitals and health care providers." In November, Microsoft reported that state-sponsored hackers in Russia and North Korea had repeatedly attacked at least seven companies involved in the research and production of COVID-19 vaccines.

Perlroth reports (and it's hard to tell if this is hyperbole) that the N.S.A. has a hundred analysts working on cyber offense for every analyst working on cyber defense. In the fall, CISA dedicated itself to protecting the election. On Election Day, the agency issued updates every three hours. The goal, as CISA's head, Chris Krebs, said, was for November 3rd to be "just another Tuesday on the Internet." On November 17th, after Krebs again publicly declared the election to have been free and fair—he tweeted, "59 election security experts all agree, 'in every case of which we are aware, these claims (of fraud) either have been unsubstantiated or are technically incoherent'"—Trump fired him. The feared Election Day attacks never came, not only because CISA worked well but also, Perlroth suggests, because they were no longer necessary. "Our candidate is chaos," a Kremlin operative told a reporter in 2016. That candidate stalked the nation in 2016 and again in 2020.

In December, when CISA had no appointed director or deputy director, it was reported that, for months, hackers, likely employed by the Russian government, had broken into Microsoft Office 365 systems at the departments of Treasury and Commerce, partly by way of holes in software updates from a company that supplied network-monitoring cybersecurity software. It has since become clear that the breach reached into the Centers for Disease Control, the Departments of Justice, Labor, Energy, Homeland Security, and State, and classified research centers including Los Alamos National Laboratory, in addition to hundreds of private companies. The scale of the breach, and its consequences, is not yet clear; so far, it's too big to measure. Trump said he did not believe that Russia could have been involved; the federal government has not retaliated, at least publicly. Biden, in the days before he took office, spoke of actions that would include, and go beyond, sanctions. Meanwhile, the federal government is effectively insecure. So are most of the rest of us. While writing this essay, I got an "important security alert" from my employer: "Microsoft has informed us of an intrusion into Harvard's Office 365 email service."

The arrogant recklessness of the people who have been buying and selling the vulnerability of the rest of us is not just part of an intelligence-agency game; it has been the ethos of Wall Street and Silicon Valley for decades. Move fast and break things; the money will trickle down; click, click, click, click, buy, buy, buy, like, like, like, like, expose, expose, expose. Perlroth likes a piece of graffiti she once saw: "Move slowly and fix your shit." Lock down the code, she's saying. Bar the door. This raises the question of the horse's whereabouts relative to the barn. If you listen, you can hear the thunder of hooves. ♦

NOW DO IT AS YOU

How Mike Nichols met his moment.

BY LOUIS MENAND

Mike Nichols and Elaine May opened for Mort Sahl at the Village Vanguard in October, 1957. Apart from their manager, Jack Rollins, whom they'd met for the first time just a week or two before, no one in New York had ever heard of them.

Nichols and May had worked out their comedy act in Chicago, playing mostly hole-in-the-wall venues as members of a local theatre group called the Compass. They performed sketches—a man on the phone with his mother, a movie star getting interviewed, a man trying to pick up his secretary in a bar. They had a script, but left room for ad-libs, and they ended the show by asking the audience to suggest an opening line, a closing line, and a style (Shakespeare, Greek tragedy, Jack Kerouac), and then improvising a skit. They were an overnight hit. By the second week, they were upstaging Sahl, a man not renowned for the length of his fuse, and he began cancelling their set.

They moved uptown to a tonier joint, the Blue Angel, on East Fifty-fifth Street, where they did a midnight show. It quickly started selling out, and soon they were the talk of the town (nightlife division). In those days, television variety shows scouted talent in supper clubs like the Blue Angel, and in December Nichols and May went on "The Steve Allen Show." In January, they performed two sketches on an NBC special, where they were seen by tens of millions of viewers.

They were now nationally known and in demand. Rollins asked for big fees, and by the spring May had an apartment on Riverside Drive, and Nichols was living in a duplex on East Fifty-eighth Street and driving a Mercedes convertible. He was twenty-six. It was the first time that he had had any money. He found that he enjoyed the life style.

Nichols and May released an album, "Improvisations to Music," in 1958. It made it onto the charts and was nominated for a Grammy. In 1960, they took their act to Broadway, where "An Evening with Mike Nichols and Elaine May" ran for three hundred and eleven performances. The album of the show went to No. 10 in the *Billboard* rankings and won a Grammy.

Some people who saw them perform—including the critic Edmund Wilson, who went to the Broadway show four times—thought that May was the star. May is a kind of comic genius. Her father, Jack Berlin, worked in the Yiddish theatre, and she had been appearing onstage since she was a child. She was fearless—also glamorous, sexy, and terrifying to men. (She and Nichols were not lovers.) There is a story that when they were performing in Chicago she would go onstage without underwear and flash the audience.

She married when she was sixteen, had a daughter (Jeannie Berlin, who became a movie actress), split from her

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Nichols on the set of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966), which swept the Academy Award nominations.

husband, and hitchhiked from Los Angeles to Chicago, where she hung out at the university, attending classes but never registering. That was where she met Nichols, a University of Chicago dropout who had found a home of sorts as an actor on the local drama scene.

Nichols was widely regarded as (his term) a prick. He was supercilious and had a quick tongue—"a scary person," as one colleague put it. May was introduced to him by the Compass's director, Paul Sills, as "the only other person at the University of Chicago who is as hostile as you." (The Compass became Second City, the legendary feeder troupe for "Saturday Night Live"; Sills was its original director.) They quickly recognized that they were soul mates. They were sophisticated, faster with a comeback than anyone they knew, and unencumbered by conventional, or even unconventional, pieties. They saw through everything and everybody, including themselves.

More to the point, as May put it, "we found each other hilarious." Onstage, they were complementary. "He was always directing the scene while he was doing it," one of the Compass players remembered. "Elaine would never do that. Her bursts were spontaneous. I always felt that in their act, she was really the driving force." Nichols did not disagree. "She was more interested in taking chances than in being a hit," he said. "I was more interested in making the audience happy."

What made the show so hot? Nichols and May were witty people, but they used standard comic setups (the quarrelsome couple, the all-thumbs first date), and they lampooned some pretty soft targets—the British movie "Brief Encounter," for instance, which they set in a dentist's office. ("There, I've said it. I do love you. Rinse out, please.") Despite the reputation the act acquired, the dialogue was not remotely risqué. They were not in Lenny Bruce territory. They were barely in Mort Sahl territory.

Part of the appeal was the nature of the comic pitch. Nichols and May were making fun of the kind of people who came to see them, a very marketable brand of humor. Jules Feiffer's cartoons in the *Village Voice*, which started appearing in 1956, made fun of the kind of people who read the *Village Voice*—"Oh, my God," Feiffer said to himself after seeing Nichols and May perform, "they're me, but they're better"—just as *The New Yorker's* cartoons make fun of the kind of people who read (and write for) *The New Yorker*. It's not that people like to laugh at themselves. They like to laugh at people who are just a little more fatuous and self-absorbed than themselves. The reaction isn't "That's me." The reaction is "I know that type."

Audiences must also have been pleased that they were getting humor with a bit of a brow. The routines made references to Béla Bartók and Bertrand Russell; this was not Bob Hope one-line-and-a-rim-shot stuff. And Nichols and May weren't telling jokes; they were acting. This meant that the laughs they got felt like quality laughs.

One ingredient in the reception of the show may have had to do with what made people nervous around the pair back in Chicago. They channelled their hostility into their act. It was funny with a drop of acid. One of their closing numbers, besides the improv sketch, was a twenty-minute routine that began with them playing squabbling children, who become bickering parents, who, at some point, become the real Mike and the real Elaine, yelling at each other onstage. The fighting escalates until they become physically violent, and, just at the point where everyone in the theatre is feeling acutely uncomfortable watching a show that has somehow gone off the rails, Nichols shouts at May, "What are you doing?" And she says, "Pirandello"—that is, metatheatre. They bow and go off. They turned their wit on the audience.

Metatheatre—is that the person or the actor?—is an underlying theme of Mark Harris's hugely entertaining "Mike Nichols: A Life" (Penguin Press). Who was Mike Nichols when he wasn't playing Mike Nichols? It's not an easy question. As Meryl Streep, who starred in three of his movies, observed, the reason he understood acting was that "he was acting all the time."

Harris's biography is filled with stories, and Nichols, who died in 2014, was, above all, a storyteller. As the director of some twenty films and almost thirty plays, he told stories written by other people. But he also had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of his own stories, and there are lots of stories *about* Nichols, some of which are collected in "Life Isn't Everything: Mike Nichols, as Remembered by 150 of His Closest Friends," edited by Ash Carter and Sam Kashner (Henry Holt). Many of these are behind-the-scenes show-biz anecdotes—in other words, gossip. They've been polished smooth by circulation, and so have to be taken with a little salt, but they give genuine insights into how the Broadway and the Hollywood sausages are made. It helps that Harris himself is a talented storyteller.

Making stories was how Nichols coped with the world. The biographical question is: why was there a need to cope? The answer is not mysterious. Nichols was unusually self-aware, and he liked to talk about his life. To some extent, the Mike Nichols story is a story by Mike Nichols.

His "real" name was Igor Michael Peschkowsky, and he was born in Berlin in 1931. His father, Pavel, was a doctor. His mother, Brigitte Landauer, was from an accomplished German family. They were what T. S. Eliot called "freethinking Jews," but in Hitler's Germany only the Jewish part mattered, and in 1938 Pavel left to start a practice in New York City. In 1939, Igor, age seven, and his younger brother, Robert, who was three, travelled unaccompanied across the Atlantic to join him. It took six days. Their mother did not arrive for almost a year.

For little Igor, fleeing Germany was an adventure. The problems started here. Pavel had changed his name to Paul Nichols (his patronymic was Nikolayevich); his son changed his first name to Mike, because Mike Nichols sounded better than Michael (pronounced in the German style: Mick-eye-ell). He Americanized himself, but he did not fit in. At school, he was "as far outside as an outsider can get," a classmate, Henry Zuckerman, remembered. (Henry Zuckerman became Buck Henry; he and Nichols later worked together on several movies, starting with "The Graduate.") Part of the problem was that he

was unable to grow hair on any part of his body, not even eyelashes, the result of a defective whooping-cough vaccine, and his father refused to let him wear a wig. So he was bullied.

Both parents were having affairs, meanwhile, and they fought at home in front of the children, to whom they seem not to have paid much attention. In 1944, Paul died of leukemia. When the war in Europe ended, Brigitte's sister was able to get out of Germany and join them, but within weeks of her arrival she was hit by a bus on Central Park West and killed.

The family was forced to get by on an uncertain income. Brigitte was anxious and demanding, and a rift developed between her and Mike, who was now a teen-ager. (The nagging-mother routine was inspired by a phone call from Brigitte.) She did allow him to be fitted for a hairpiece and false eyebrows, and, for the rest of his life, he had to make himself up every morning, as though he were going on a set.

Nichols later said that he never had a friend until he went to the University of Chicago. He entered in the fall of 1949, when he was seventeen. Nichols was well read, but academically indifferent, professionally undirected, and highly defended. He had nothing to back up his sense of superiority, which is not a good place to be.

This was the prick Elaine May met. To be accepted by someone equally quick, smart, and capable of cruelty seems to have changed Nichols's life. The relationship validated him. Plus, he had found something he was good at: improvised comedy. When he was snotty onstage, people didn't shun him. They laughed.

Success did not turn Nichols suddenly into a nice person. As Harris shows us, there was always a "scary" side to his work self. As a director, he sometimes abused the crew, picked on actors he took a dislike to, and fired people on a dime. He had a "no assholes" rule at work, but he knew that he was sometimes the asshole, and he regretted it.

Still, he was not usually an asshole, because he realized he did not need to be. He had an intuitive grasp of the micro-sociology of personal interactions, as a director ought to have. He picked up the cues almost before they had been delivered. Most people aren't that fast. "His behavior, his manner are silky soft," Richard Burton said of him. "He appears to defer to you, then in the end he gets exactly what he wants."

A personality emerged that many people, including, and especially, rich and famous people, found adorable. Nichols lunched with Jackie Kennedy and dined with the William Paleys. Richard Avedon, Leonard Bernstein, Tom Stoppard, and William Styron were intimate friends. He went out with Mia Farrow and Gloria Steinem; in 1988, after several unsuccessful unions, he married Diane Sawyer. He worked with some of the biggest stars of his day, from Elizabeth Taylor to Tom Hanks, and most of them seem to have loved the experience.

In 1962, more or less out of the blue, Nichols was offered the job of directing a new play by a writer just starting out in theatre. The play was "Barefoot in the Park," and the writer was Neil Simon. "This was the job I had been preparing for without knowing it," Nichols told Harris. It wasn't just that he felt naturally good at it. "If you're missing your father, as I had all through my adolescence," he said, "there's something about playing the role of a father that's very reassuring. I had found a process that allowed me to be my father and the group's father."

Elizabeth Ashley, who had just won a Tony, was attached to the production, and opposite her Nichols cast Robert Redford, then a little-known actor whose real interest was painting. The play, which opened on Broadway in October, 1963, was a box-office and critical sensation. Reviewers thought that Nichols had done something new. He won a Tony for Best Direction, and the play ran for almost four years. The next Simon play he directed, "The Odd Couple," opened in March, 1965, and ran for close to two years. Nichols won another Tony. (He went on to win eight, the last in 2012, for "Death of a Salesman," starring Philip Seymour Hoffman.) Then he moved to film. And the winning streak continued.

When Nichols got into the movie business, Hollywood was in crisis mode. Leisure dollars are finite, and the movies' share was shrinking. In 1950, 12.3 per cent of Americans' recreational budget was spent on movie tickets; in 1965, it was 3.3 per cent. Hollywood was not keeping up with the rest of the culture. There were a lot of reasons for this, but by 1965 two had become obvious. One was that the movie audience was becoming younger and more male. You were not going to reach them with Julie Andrews musicals.

The other problem, not unrelated, was the Motion Picture Production Code, which the industry had adopted in 1930

"Damn it, they sat me next to another crying baby."

"You first. Crab Rangoon has the right of way over cheese pizza."

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as a system of self-regulation. Although it had been revised incrementally over the years, it was still about ten years behind educated taste. Foreign imports—Bergman, Fellini, the French New Wave directors, whose work was not subject to Production Code review—had at least the reputation of being racier and more explicit. Imports were a very small percentage of the American box office, but they were making Hollywood movies look dumb by comparison.

Nichols's entry was perfectly timed. His first picture, the movie adaptation of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," poked a big hole in the already crumbling dike of the Code. His second, "The Graduate," hit the demographic bull's-eye.

Albee's play features two middle-aged semi-alcoholics, George and Martha (he is an associate professor of history; she is the daughter of the college's president), who pretend to have a son, and who invite a much younger couple over for drinks and serious head games. Why would a major studio, Warner Bros., choose to have this dark "psychological" melodrama directed by a man who had made his name with Neil Simon comedies, and had never stood behind a movie camera? (Indeed, Nichols had no idea how cameras worked—not even that you could use a long lens to shoot closeups from a distance.)

His hiring was the result of Nichols's ability to establish friendships with people who were generally suspicious of offers of friendship—that is, celebrities. When he and May were on Broadway, Richard Burton and Julie Andrews were starring in "Camelot" in the adjoining theatre, and after his show Nichols, who knew Andrews through her husband, walked down the alley to hang out in Burton's dressing room. Burton was more than a leading man. He was well read, like Nichols, and he knew theatre. They became friends.

Soon afterward, Burton went to Rome to shoot "Cleopatra," and he and Taylor began their scandalous affair. They were trailed by paparazzi, and when Burton had to be away on another picture he asked Nichols to fly over and take care of Taylor. Nichols arrived and arranged a day trip to a place where she wouldn't be recognized, and they, too, became close.

"Cleopatra" was one of the more spectacular flops in movie history, mostly because of extravagant production costs. Twentieth Century Fox actually sued Burton and Taylor for fifty million dollars for conduct detrimental to the picture. But "Cleopatra" had made them tabloid superstars, the Brangelina of their day. Although they were clearly a high-risk package, they were potentially box-office gold. Studios just had to be willing to roll the dice.

Harris says that Albee did not like the idea of Nichols directing the adaptation. "My play is not a farce," he complained. But, in exchange for a lot of money for the rights, Albee had given up casting and director approval. He wanted Bette Davis for the female lead; so did Jack Warner, and so did Bette Davis, for whom the part might practically have been written. Albee thought that Taylor was too young—she was thirty-three, and Martha is in her fifties—but she was the actress the producer wanted. She took the part after Burton (they were now married) told her she must, to keep anyone else from taking it. She had never seen, or even read, the play.

Taylor told the producer that the director she wanted was Nichols, who had lobbied her for the job, and, after the Hollywood veteran Fred Zinnemann turned it down, Nichols was hired. When Burton heard the news, he signed on. Whatever else Nichols brought to the project, from the studio's point of view, he drastically reduced the risk factor.

Nichols said that he never again felt as confident directing a movie. He believed that he understood the play. When Buck Henry asked him what "Virginia Woolf" was about, he said, "It's about a man and a woman named George and Martha who invite a young couple over for drinks after a faculty party. They drink and talk and argue for ten to twelve hours, until you get to know them." For a play that offers numerous invitations to allegorize—George and Martha and their imaginary child? Who might they be? Virginia Woolf . . . because she was possibly infertile? Because she was possibly a lesbian?—this was a radical simplification.

But it was Nichols's philosophy of acting. What reviewers had responded to in "Barefoot in the Park" and "The Odd Couple" was the use of the fourth wall, the imaginary barrier between the actors and the audience. The old style of Broadway comedy had the actors playing to the house, trying for laughs. Working with May had convinced Nichols that actors should not think that what they're saying is funny. "We're doing 'King Lear,'" he used to say in rehearsals for "Barefoot in the Park."

So in a play like Albee's, when the characters are in a room—George and Martha's living room, for example, where the entire play is set—the actors don't

need to declaim. They just need to talk the way people in a room talk to one another. If the play has been written properly, the drama will take care of itself. Nichols was famous for the direction, after listening to a speech, "That was wonderful. Now do it as you."

Another thing Nichols believed in was "business." Don't just talk; do something. In everyday life, people talk when they are eating dinner, or folding clothes, or getting dressed for work. Nichols liked to find things for his actors to do. The first act of "The Odd Couple" is a poker game, not an exciting thing to watch from fifty feet away. Nichols made up all kinds of activity to give the scene life. Frank Rich called it "the funniest staging of anything I've ever seen in the theatre." In the opening scene in Nichols's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," Taylor delivers her lines while eating a chicken leg, and Burton delivers his while sitting at the kitchen table doing a crossword puzzle. Because that's what people do.

Later, Nichols signed on to direct extravaganzas like "Catch-22" and the television adaptation of "Angels in America." But his best work was people-in-a-room scenes, such as the kitchen scenes with Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell, and Cher in "Silkwood." The ending of that movie is a mess, and it doesn't really work as a "60 Minutes"-style exposé of the nuclear-power industry, which Nichols was probably not much interested in anyway. But the kitchen scenes are unforgettable.

Some of the language in Albee's play—"screw," "monkey nipples," "hump the hostess," and so on—was Code-averse. Luckily for Warner Bros., Jack Valenti had just become the president of the Motion Picture Association of America, and he was determined to replace the Code. So when the Production Code Administration voted to deny approval to "Virginia Woolf," the M.P.A.A. overruled it.

Another minefield that filmmakers had to negotiate was the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures. The bishops were not going to like "hump the hostess." Nichols arranged for his friend Jackie Kennedy to be invited to the screening. When the movie ended, she was to lean over to the officials vetting the picture and whisper, "What a beautiful movie. Jack would have loved it." Apparently, she did this, and it worked. "Virginia Woolf" managed to be both risqué and blessed by the Church. Within two years, the Production Code was replaced by the ratings system.

"Virginia Woolf" received Academy Award nominations in every category for which it was eligible, thirteen in all, one of only two movies to have swept the nominations. Taylor won for Best Actress, and Sandy Dennis for Supporting Actress. Nichols lost Best Director to Zinnemann, who won for "A Man for All Seasons"—Old Hollywood. But New Hollywood was just around the corner.

"The Graduate" is based on a novel by Charles Webb, published in 1963, about a college graduate, named Benjamin, who returns to his parents' home in Southern California, inexplicably loses his motivation, and gets seduced into a loveless affair by the wife of his father's law partner. Nichols thought that the story was trite. "Kid, older lady, that's how everyone got started," as he put it. But he wanted to direct the picture.

One of the things that made "The Graduate" not just a hit movie but a phenomenon was the decision to cast Dustin Hoffman as Benjamin. Redford had wanted the part, but Nichols knew he was wrong for it. "When was the last time you struck out with a girl?" he asked him. Redford said, "What do you mean?" Nichols said, "Exactly."

Hoffman was then barely making a living doing Off Broadway theatre. Nichols had auditioned him for a musical called "The Apple Tree," and he stuck in Nichols's mind. So Hoffman was flown out for a screen test. People who watched Hoffman's test were unimpressed. Then they watched it on film. Nichols later said that Elizabeth Taylor was the only other actor he worked with who could do what Hoffman did. He called it that "deal where you do nothing and it turns out you were doing everything. That's what a great movie actor does. They don't know how they do it, and I don't know how they do it." The camera transformed Hoffman into a star.

Nichols was listening to Simon and Garfunkel's album "Sounds of Silence" while he was shooting "The Graduate," and the duo reluctantly agreed to

record some new songs for the movie. In the end, though, Nichols chose mostly songs from the album, which may have been the key to reaching the young male audience. I remember going to the movie with a friend. We were both fifteen. As soon as "The Sounds of Silence" started playing, we were each thinking, Wait a second. I own that record! It was as though the movie had been made just for us.

"The Graduate" was released at the end of 1967. By the end of 1969, it was the third-highest-grossing film in movie history. Hoffman, who was nominated for Best Actor, was paid scale, and netted three thousand dollars. Nichols is said to have got six per cent of the net profits, and to have made six million dollars. He also won the Academy Award for Best Director.

In the decade that spanned "Steve Allen" and "The Graduate," Nichols changed entertainment culture. With May, he brought improv to Broadway. He revolutionized stage comedy. He helped break the grip of movie censorship, and he directed a film that is considered, along with Arthur Penn's "Bonnie and Clyde," to mark the birth of the New Hollywood.

Then it stopped. Not the work—Nichols was always an A-list director. His projects were well financed; he drew on the best talent. As he knew perfectly well, some misses were in the cards. Several of the movies he made after "The Graduate"—"Catch-22," "The Day of the Dolphin," and "The Fortune"—were major critical and financial disappointments. But he went on to have many hits, including "Silkwood," "Working Girl," and "The Birdcage." He continued to rake in the Tonys. He won two Emmys for "Angels in America."

He did make inexplicable decisions, besides choosing material that did not play to his strengths. He let actors like Al Pacino, in "Angels," and Kathy Bates, in "Primary Colors," chew up their scenes. He also, notoriously, directed a "Waiting for Godot" with Robin Williams, Steve Martin, Bill Irwin, and F. Murray Abraham, not exactly ensemble players. If there is any play in which the laughs take care of themselves, it's "Waiting for Godot." But Nichols let the actors ham it up. He later said he had not been able to find the play's "central metaphor." Central metaphor? "Godot" is about two guys on a road somewhere, talking. One of them is taking off his boots . . .

Unlike virtually every other director associated with the New Hollywood—Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, Stanley Kubrick—Nichols was not an auteur. There is no such thing as a Mike Nichols picture. The critical queen of the New Hollywood, Pauline Kael, hated his movies. "Mike Nichols's 'gift' is that he lets the audience direct him," she said of "The Graduate." "This is demagoguery in the arts."

Well, it *is* a mass-market entertainment medium. Millions of dollars are being spent; people are supposed to like it. And most of the plays and films Nichols directed people liked. As he learned working with May, he was not a risk-taker, and did not think of himself as an artist. "It's so funny you think of yourself as an artist," he told Richard Avedon, who badly wanted his photography to be taken seriously.

Harris thinks that Nichols's choices were influenced by money. By 2000, he was reportedly being paid for his movie work, in addition to a seven-and-a-half-million-dollar fee, twelve per cent of the gross. That's why he took on movie projects he shouldn't have and why he did less new theatre than he might have.

Nichols liked travelling in life's first-class cabin. He lived in a triplex penthouse in the Beresford. He bred Arabian horses. He drove expensive cars. When he was shooting on location, he flew in his personal chef. There is a story that he stopped the shooting on "Regarding Henry" (a major misfire) because the caviar being used in a scene was an inferior brand. Even Avedon, who had helped introduce Nichols to that life, felt he had lost his head a little. Nichols also got into recreational drugs. Harris says that these included crack cocaine, and that Nichols became addicted to Halcion, which made him anxious and suicidal. He is supposed to have learned from a celebrity friend that Halcion was causing his mood disorders. Which celebrity—Randy Newman, Quincy Jones—depends on who is telling the story, and this is one of those Mike Nichols stories which feel embellished, or more embellished than usual. A wealthy man did not have a personal physician? Who was prescribing the Halcion? He wasn't getting it on the street.

But it's also the case that expectations for Nichols's career were shaped by a misreading of who he was. "The Graduate" is the story of a rich kid who has an affair with a rich woman and will presumably end up marrying her rich daughter. Benjamin's anomie is entirely unexplained. There are no political references in the novel or the movie. In the scenes set on the Berkeley campus, the students all look as though they were in prep school. It might as well be set in 1955. Nichols thought he was making a movie about Los Angeles, not the generation gap. There wasn't a radical or a countercultural bone in his body.

Part of what dated him was his fixation on what used to be called the War Between Men and Women. That's the nut of "Virginia Woolf," and it's the nut of "Carnal Knowledge," which came out in 1971. The movie is based on a screenplay by Jules Feiffer, and it ended up doing well through the good fortune of being banned in the state of Georgia. This was catnip to moviegoers, but the film is basically ninety minutes of Art Garfunkel and Jack Nicholson talking about tits and ass. It's not just misogynistic. It's misanthropic.

What was frustrating to Nichols's admirers about the path his work took after "The Graduate" was that he was more sophisticated than a lot of the material he ended up directing. There are a few glimpses of the paths he might have taken. In 1996, he was talked into performing in a limited London run of a Wallace Shawn play called "The Designated Mourner," an elliptical and "knotty" text (as Harris calls it) about people reacting to the rise of fascism.

There are three parts, and all the actors are sitting down—which suited Nichols, who was never a physical actor. His performance was filmed days after the theatrical run ended, and it is uncanny. It's just a person talking, but it makes you feel as though you never really watched a person talking before. Streep flew to London to see Nichols in the play. "It's some of the best acting I've ever seen any man do," she said. For, of course, what you're thinking all the time you're watching this astonishingly lifelike person is what an amazing acting job it is. ♦

THE HUMAN CLAY

How Lucian Freud found his subject.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

"Self-Portrait (Reflection)," from 2002, when the artist was eighty years old.

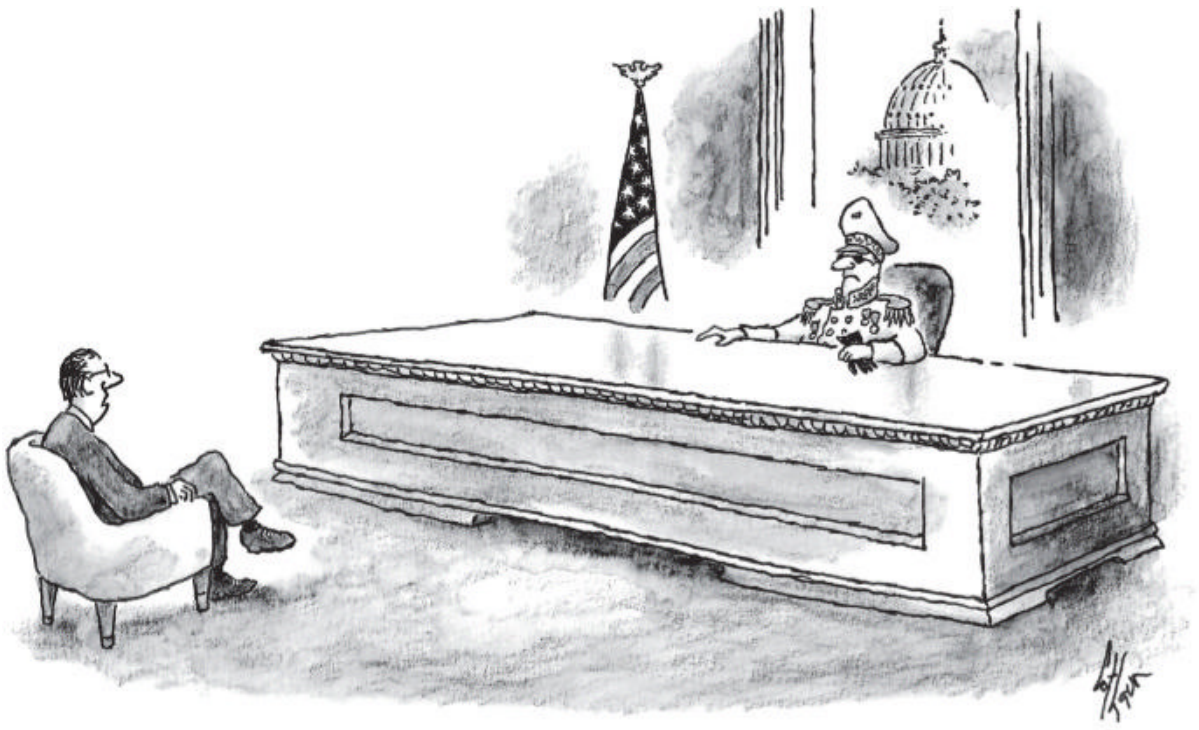
Among the Old Masters, still-lifes and landscapes tend to be as individuated as fingerprints, but the naked body provokes a more generalized reaction. The nude in art should come in as many varieties as there are bodies in the world but tends to fall, instead, into two distinct clumps, or lines: the Suspiciously Perfect and the Depressingly Truthful. The Suspiciously Perfect, which can be produced in life only by adherence to a strenuous regimen and a certain amount of retouching, stems from the Greek tradition: all those idealized bodies of kouroi, the musculature of their torsos fitting them like Armani sweaters; all those curvy Aphrodites, crouching and stretching. (This figural tradition persists both as Photoshopped Instagram selfies and, in parodic form, in the ghastly-glamorous painting of John Currin.) The Depressingly Truthful involves what Kenneth Clark, in his great study "The Nude" (1956), called the Gothic tradition, with the body as inherently pathetic, its whorls of fat and collapsing muscles mute testimony to the sheer absurdity of living as a furless, awkwardly bipedal primate. The mixed model, where the body can be both a bit perfect and a bit depressing ("I might be more perfect, if I lost five pounds and worked out more"), is a possibility in life but is rarely pulled off in art.

Of that second, realist tradition, the master of the century past was surely Lucian Freud, the British painter of fat people who own their fat—who maintain an ungrumbling harmony with their own imperfection so complete that it becomes a kind of perfection. One can feel the absence of central heating and of gyms alike in every picture. Freud was a grandson of Sigmund, and a legendary figure in London—for gambling and love affairs—even before he was a first-rate painter. He is the subject of a two-volume biography by the British art critic William Feaver, "The Lives of Lucian Freud" (Knopf), the second volume of which, subtitled "Fame," has just been published. (The first volume, subtitled "The Restless Years," appeared in 2019.)

That Freud would get two volumes of biography, and that they would be published with aplomb in America, would not have seemed likely a generation ago. His reputation is itself a study in changing taste: his best work in London coincided with the rise and triumph of American painting, so much so that even the finest British art critic of the period, David Sylvester—who admired Freud fitfully—took the primacy of American abstraction for granted. Compared with the sublime far shores of a de Kooning or a Twombly, Freud's intensely realized naturalism, with its insistent detailing and conventional, if deliberately slapdash, illusionistic modelling, looked provincial and *retardataire*—a local taste, like warm beer. His reputation in America was, at best, peripheral. "The realists, like the poor, will always be with us," Robert Pincus-Witten, a don of American art, sighed.

Even within the British art establishment, Freud struggled against the tides. As Feaver reveals in the new volume, the Arts Council of Great Britain refused to include Freud in a 1974 group show, explaining that his work "represents the extending of traditions established well before 1960"—fatuous avant-gardism turned into bureaucratic fiat, rather as if the same council had refused to support the publication of poetry in rhyme, also a tradition established well before 1960. (The Arts Council may have done that, too, come to think of it.) In France, Freud's art was regarded as at best an oddity, serving a general French suspicion that this is simply what the Brits look like without their clothes, and why they should put them back on.

Yet, as American art triumphalism



"You've drifted very far from the center."

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cracked, Freud began to look much better. In 1989, Robert Hughes devoted a book, both brilliantly descriptive and shallowly polemical, to Freud's painting, and to the insufficiently recognized importance of his "School of London," which alone, Hughes maintained, had kept in place the central artistic principle of seeing and looking and investigating and recording. This school was, like all schools, somewhat willed into existence; its name seems to have originated with the fine painter R. B. Kitaj, who had used it in his 1976 exhibition, "The Human Clay." That phrase, in turn, derives from Auden's great poem in rhyme royal, "Letter to Lord Byron": "To me Art's subject is the human clay, / And landscape but a background to a torso; / All Cézanne's apples I would give away / For one small Goya or a Daumier." It was the keynote of the movement.

Freud was an odd pick for Hughes's faith in the centrality of skill, since it was exactly the klutziness of his hand and the deliberately primitive look of his early work that had first brought him to attention; even late in his career, his was still an awkward hand, from indifference as much as from choice. The classroom craft of life drawing was something he largely disdained. "I've always felt that I long to have what I imagine natural talent felt like," Freud told Feaver. If he had been a better painter, he would have been a less interesting artist.

As the polemics dividing representational painting from abstract painting gave way to an acceptance of plural paths, Freud rose in critical favor; today, his pictures sell for many millions of dollars at auction. We now laud the heroism of close inspection, not as exposing an anti-ideal but as itself a kind of idealism, one somehow close, in its fidelity to detail, to the transcendence of truth.

Biographies of painters depend on incidental pleasures—since the core subject is present only in minimal reproduction—and the pleasures of Feaver's two volumes lie in his novelistic depiction of the London art world in which Freud came of age and flourished, from the onset of the Second World War until the end of the century. The parallel generations of New York painters tended to war with one another, with work the principal preoccupation, and were, aside from specifically art-mad writers like Frank O'Hara, largely isolated from the literary currents and quarrels of the day. In London, *not* working, or not being seen to work, was the principal preoccupation; Freud's early days were spent, in Feaver's account, in a fever dream of racetracks and Soho clubs, with literary and political and artistic lives mixed, mostly in a lake of alcohol. Everyone drinks everything. Everyone has sex with everyone else. (Although Freud behaved in ways that encouraged the idea that he had gay affairs, it isn't clear whether he actually did.)

So the School of London painters appear in these pages, of course, with the wise Kitaj philosophizing and Francis Bacon fellating a stranger in a Soho club. But pretty much everyone louche and literary shows up, too, to act in characteristic ways. Here's Orwell, at Oscar Wilde's Café Royal. There's Stephen Spender, who becomes smitten with Freud. Auden turns up to condemn the painter as crooked with money. Ian Fleming hosts him in Jamaica, shortly after having finished "Casino Royale," Fleming's wife, Ann, being a close Freud friend. Henry Green and Graham Greene drop by. Caroline Blackwood, the femme fatale of the sixties literati, shows up to marry Freud, briefly, before eventually moving on to Robert Lowell. The eccentric memoirist J. R. Ackerley is here. Even his dog Queenie is here, to drive Freud crazy as a portrait subject.

The interpenetration of these circles seems a sign less of Freud's worldliness than of the kind of world that London offers: an equable, if often bad-tempered concord of tables, more companionable and less ideologically divided than New York, with right-wingers and left-wingers breaking bread, and spivs and earls sharing spaces, and people. Political and ideological differences are less hard-edged, sexual and erotic liaisons are more open-ended, and judgments about people are both more malicious (everyone's motives are assumed to be sordid) and more tolerant (since everyone's motives are sordid, self-righteousness is a bore). Less is expected, and less is received. For an American reader of artists' biographies, accustomed to following the daily slog from the studio to the bar to the bedroom, the peculiar density of London intimacies is heady. It produces paragraphs as delightfully batty as this one in the first volume, about the artist during the late fifties:

> Freud had already painted the Duke's sisters, Elizabeth Cavendish, whom he hardly knew, and Anne Tree, with whom he was more friendly, and who conducted investigations into bird sperm at Mereworth in Kent; he had met her through [the sculptor Jacob] Epstein, who made heads of both her and her husband, Michael Tree—owner of Colefax & Fowler, the interior decorators—whom Freud also painted and with whom he used to enjoy staying. (He had a snapshot of his host naked painting himself.) They had a chauffeur called Waters, formerly employed by Peter Beatty, the previous

owner of Mereworth who had become blind and committed suicide in 1949 by jumping out of a sixth-floor window at the Ritz. "He liked Waters to wheel him up to people he disliked at races and insult them; which he could do as he was going blind."

In the new volume, Freud (whose quoted reminiscences fleck the pages) is at one point painting Andrew Cavendish, the eleventh Duke of Devonshire, in the same cocktail of comradeship:

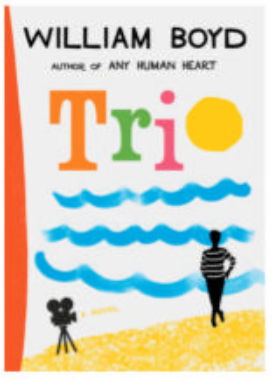
> During one of the sittings a bailiff arrived and having gained entry refused to go away. "You can't turn them out—anyway he was a huge man—and I introduced them. Andrew was a junior minister then and he asked, 'Would you mind leaving? We both work for the same people.' "

This sense, of everyone working for, or with, or around, the same people, was exquisitely London.

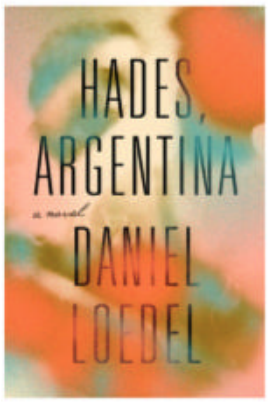
Lucian's father, Ernst, was a remarkably admirable man; an architect in Berlin in the early thirties, he spotted the coming events and got himself and his family out of Germany and to London. (Four of Sigmund's sisters were killed in the death camps.) The move was surprisingly calm. Ernst, in the manner of Berlin's grand *Bildungsbürgertum,* touchingly asked what neighborhood was most like living near the Tiergarten—meaning, near a great park—and settled in Mayfair. But he discovered that London had a more dispersed upper middle class than Paris or Berlin, and moved his family to a fine house in St. John's Wood. Ernst later in the decade assisted in Sigmund's relocation from Vienna to London as well, in notably comfortable circumstances. By special favor, Ernst's family were naturalized as British citizens, though late, in 1939. Had they not been, they could have been interned or sent abroad as "aliens," as so many Jewish refugees were.

Sigmund was present throughout Lucian's life in a very practical way: royalties from the Freud backlist were the sustenance of Freud's grandchildren for a long time, not least the high-living Lucian. After a brief and mostly happy British schooling, and a comically inept time as a merchant sailor, Freud set out, in 1941, to become a painter. He was discovered almost at once by Kenneth Clark himself, who, having perfect taste, saw his gift. Although Freud had

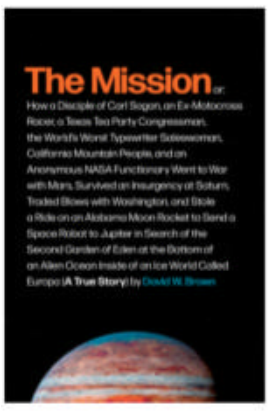
BRIEFLY NOTED



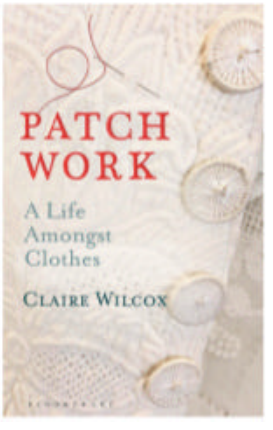
Trio, *by William Boyd (Knopf).* Following a producer, an actress, and a novelist, whose lives intersect during a film shoot in Brighton in 1968, this novel proceeds at a brisk clip, cutting from person to person. Boyd winks at the idiosyncrasies and vulgarities specific to each character's métier, and at the precarious process of artistic creation—its joy, torment, stasis, and upheaval. Musing about the film, the actress says, "I think it's about how art imitates life. And life imitates art. That's the point." "What on earth is that to mean?" her interlocutor replies. Boyd addresses these questions with tart humor and earnestness. When, after several gin-and-tonics, the novelist starts to see her book taking shape in her head, she feels that "life was suddenly worth living again."



Hades, Argentina, *by Daniel Loedel (Riverhead).* A phone call prompts the narrator of this haunting historical novel to return to Argentina a decade after the Dirty War, during which he fled to the U.S. Back in a country where "there are no dead . . . only disappeared," he is flooded with memories of his life as a young man in the nineteen-seventies, working for the military junta in a brutal detention center while slipping information to his great love, a woman devoted to the regime's overthrow. The novel weaves betrayal and sacrifice together so intricately that one cannot be disentangled from the other.



The Mission, *by David W. Brown (Custom House).* Scientists believe that any extraterrestrial life in our solar system would most likely be found on Europa, a moon of Jupiter. This book chronicles the work of a tenacious team of researchers who have spent decades investigating that possibility, despite obstacles both bureaucratic (NASA's long-standing preoccupation with Mars) and physical: Europa lies within a "pulsing, rippling" belt of radiation and is covered by an ice shell "kilometers thicker than any hole ever drilled on earth." The effort is finally rewarded, in 2015, when NASA approves the Europa Clipper mission, which may bring us closer to answering existential questions: "What if there is life elsewhere? How would the human psyche handle its discovery? And if we find it, *what do we do with it*?"



Patch Work, *by Claire Wilcox (Bloomsbury).* This memoir unfolds as a series of vignettes, each one as precisely constructed as an exhibit in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where the author works as a curator of fashion. Wilcox evokes the sensual and spiritual meaning in the fabrics we weave, wear, and leave behind: antique garments, tailored for owners long dead, whose linings and signs of repair provide conservators with "vital clues for our ghost bodies"; naphthalene-perfumed medieval felt hats and lost lappets from the eighteenth century; a purple grosgrain tunic made for Wilcox by her mother. The book also ventures far beyond the sartorial; Wilcox writes piercingly about the death of a child and of her parents, the delight and anxiety of motherhood, and the satisfaction of work well done.

an unconventional trajectory, there was recognizable authority to what he painted early on. Choosing painting was, one senses, an affirmation of the body over the brain, a way of rejecting his father's and his grandfather's more intellectual manners. He quickly evolved a faux-naïf style, with sharp outlines, flat surfaces, and a folk-art treatment of figure and face, all of a kind that might remind an American viewer of Ben Shahn, though this is Ben Shahn with a switchblade in his back pocket. Freud's "Man with a Feather (Self-Portrait)," from 1943, is still the most presciently punk picture of the time, with Freud showing himself in string tie and black suit, looking, eerily, like the rock musicians who would blossom decades later—a proto-Pete Townshend. Just as Bacon was at his best in his enigmatic pictures from the fifties, before he became the self-consciously Grand Guignol painter of screaming Popes, Freud staked a claim to greatness in the pictures he painted in the decade after the war. Certainly, his wartime portraits of Londoners at night—newsstand agents turned into Minotaurs and Soho spivs into saints—possessed a black-comedy flair. His renderings of his girlfriends (first Lorna Wishart and then her niece Kitty, whom he married) were all big eyes and slashed mouths and bright colors. They belong to a noir sensibility sweeping through the world at the time: the same spirit that lit up—or, rather, celebrated in shadows—Carol Reed's "The Third Man."

A case can be made that Freud's very best work is that of the fifties, when his hard-edged images of poignant futility hadn't yet been overwhelmed by his appetite for expressing the same emotion exclusively in human fat. Indeed, one could argue that the real annus mirabilis of British painting came in 1954. It's the year when Bacon painted "Two Figures in the Grass" and "Figure with Meat," compressed pieces of enigmatic Larkinian melancholy, not yet inflated by his later grandiosity. And it's the year when Freud painted "Hotel Bedroom," a sad, simple scene of a man gazing at a (fully clothed) woman on a Paris hotel bed, as tense and suggestive as a Pinter play, and still hard to top in his work for emotional power.

As an intimate of Freud's, Feaver is able to reproduce many conversations and monologues, which explain a lot of Freud's weird magnetism—and somehow resemble his art. That's often the way with artists: to meet Wayne Thiebaud is to witness sweetness of temperament married with iron certainty and organized rigor, like a Thiebaud painting; to meet Ed Ruscha is to hear laconic expression matched to an obviously heightened ambiguity of meaning, like a Ruscha print. Artists speak their styles, to those with ears to hear.

Feaver hears Freud. The painter is not exactly witty, and his apothegms are rarely memorable, but they have a quality of unemotional evaluation, almost clinical in its detachment, that recalls his grandfather's treatments, albeit with the subjects naked in a London studio instead of clothed on a Viennese couch. Freud's gaze is perfectly reproduced in his conversations: not cruel, but *never* flattering. They show exactly who Freud was and what he felt. He's often at his best on small things. On the experience of filmgoing: "That thing of coming out: all the people on the pavements having proper lives and you're all full of what's been on the screen." Or the superiority of bathing to sleeping: "A bath makes a punctuation for me often stronger than a night, or what remains of one, and often it has a stronger moralising effect—by which I mean a strengthening of my moral fibre—than sleeping might have." Or on the interconnection of touch and sight: "You only learn to see by touch, to relate sight to the physical world. I look and look at the model all the time to find something new, to see something new which will help me."

Freud's sex life is too central to his existence and art for a biographer to ignore. Placed on a kind of proto-penicillin as a young man by a wary family doctor, as a prophylactic against the syphilis threatened by his constant adventuring, Freud went on to father, by legend, as many as forty children. To his contemporaries, his defection from the obligations of fatherhood seemed just one of those things. "Sometimes, instead of counting sheep, I count Lucian's children," one ex-lover says. In the new volume, one of his other lover-models quotes him: "Women were always taking children off him, he'd say, 'Nothing to do with me they're having children.' " And though she adds that this was "an outrageous thing to say," she still had a child with Freud, who paid it scarcely any attention. Freud's fascination for women is tellingly detailed in Celia Paul's recent memoir, "Self-Portrait." Paul, a first-rate painter herself who began an affair with him while she was his student, documents Freud's mixture of cold indifference and sudden bursts of apparent affection. ("Lucian arrives with a huge bunch of yellow narcissi. I am trembling so much because of the unexpected gift that I can hardly lead the way up the stairs.") Several of his neglected daughters, perhaps desperate for their father's attention, became his models,

posing nude in what used to be called "explicit" positions. One feels that one has no right to find this creepy, because the people who were engaged in it didn't find it creepy, and yet one finds this creepy.

The great question about Freud is how to explain the move from the quick-catch portraits of the forties and fifties into the far more laborious and complex nudes he came to work on until his death, in 2011. He was not a natural naturist. For all the talk of his vigilant inspection of the real world, the nudes are stylized, even caricatural. A prime Freud nude, like "Naked Portrait with Reflection," of 1980, is in its way as fabricated as a period *Playboy* pictorial, but reversed; instead of the nude body stretched taut in a luxuriant architecture of curving balconies, the body collapses prone, with pendulous breasts, a barely visible waist, and inarticulate legs. A fall-down rather than a come-on.

The more aggressively "grotesque" of Freud's nudes, like "Benefits Supervisor Sleeping," of 1995—the subject, Sue Tilley, was indeed an insurance-benefits supervisor by day, though also an artist—are much less shocking now than when they first appeared. A descriptive entry calls her "obese," but Freud doesn't think she's fat. He is too respectful of her wrinkles. She is a Renoir nude without the dappled light, a Rubens woman without the delicacy of overlaid charm or fur. One thing Freud can never be fairly accused of is treating his sitters as freaks; the human body might itself be grotesque, in his vision, in its sagging time-arc toward formlessness, but we all share the same sad shape.

Freud's nudes are Freudian in another way, too. Usually, the recumbent or sleeping nude in art is highly eroticized, as with all those Venuses in Ingres or Giorgione. They are allowing themselves to be looked at without having to be present at the scene of the gaze. But sleep, for Freud's figures, doesn't involve an absence of attention that allows us to gawk; it evokes the presence of their own inner attention, which compels us to recognize them as similarly human. We all share one dream life, a singular unconscious, in which we leave our bodies for our minds. The soft shell left behind as we drift toward dreams is what Freud shows us.

All of Freud's pictures are portraits. One comes away from the flesh remembering the faces. Throughout Feaver's book, the single most powerful of Freud's obsessions is with his models—finding them, losing them, sometimes loving them. He sees his subjects, both the men and the women, not as a more or less agreeable canvas to work on but as individuals—not types but people. The continuity of heads and bodies in Freud's work is the grammar of their humanism, with pudenda treated with the individuality that a more traditional portrait art reserved for the wrinkles around the mouth. With a Freud etching like "Bella," of 1982, the alertness and unashamed curiosity—the turn of the head, the spark of the eyes—is what we recall. The faces are treated as uncosmetically as the bodies, uglified every bit as much, but no more so. Indeed, if one could covet one or two Freuds for the museum of one's mind—which is the only place to have them, one of his canvases having recently sold for twenty-nine million dollars—it might be the portrait heads. It's hard to find more satisfying pictures of worldly people than his of David Hockney and Jeremy King, or his series of self-portraits. They seem carved out of wood by experience.

One of the virtues of Feaver's last volume is that it shows how strenuously Freud rejected the minute, obsessive realism of Northern Renaissance painting, or the *horror vacui* naturalism of the Pre-Raphaelites (both traditions with which some critics associated him), and how he situated himself instead within the French modernist tradition. It turns out that what came to the rescue of the human clay was . . . Cézanne's apples. The difference between the early, graphic, flat Freud and the later, richer one is in his Cézanniste attention to form-making as an act of conscience. It's his technique that takes him elsewhere. It's all very well to talk piously about the painstaking act of seeing; the painter has to translate those pieties into a practice. In place of Cézanne's rectangular, latticed strokes, Freud composes with a strongly handled, shield-shaped mark—emphatic swiping enforced with a persistent diagonal rhythm, so that each sharp mark runs jagged to the next, like the tracks of skis. White highlights, meanwhile, are nakedly laid on, not modulated from within the shade but splashed down impulsively. Agitation is the signature mark, and angst the signature emotion.

Freud, as his love of Cézanne implies, was a Francophile, with favored louche Paris hotels, and yet his work, in the end, belongs to the art of his chilly island. National traditions in art are as real (and as labile under influence) as national traditions in cooking; that they alter does not mean that they do not exist. The British nude is as real as the British breakfast. Feaver quotes Ruskin's counsel to "go to nature in all singleness of heart . . . rejecting nothing, selecting nothing and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth." Freud, he allows, thought this seemingly irrelevant advice was "preachy yet sensible." Cézanne, the old line had it, wanted to do Poussin over from nature—to make something with classical order but without the stock clichés of mythology. Freud wanted to do Cézanne over from candor—to make a fully realized art of dense contemplation and diligent inspection that did not wince or pause at a single human fold, wrinkle, or pelvic peculiarity.

Realism has many chapels. By the sixties, American art had taken up the Whitmanesque idea of the religion of real things, the belief that all ideas could be dissolved into actual objects, flags, and soup cans, and managed to achieve both its burlesque and its apotheosis. English painting asked a different question: What would happen if one took Ruskin's demand seriously and applied it to modern painting? That was what the School of London tried to school us about. Rembrandt is grander, Cézanne is nobler—but, when it comes to the human animal qua animal, Freud has his own place. The old English question was what a realist art that rejects nothing human would be like, if you did it consciously and purposefully, even heartlessly, but without prejudice, and for a lifetime. Freud found out. ♦

BOOKS

THAT'S THE JOKE

Big laughs and hard silences in Erin Belieu's poetry.

BY DAN CHIASSON

The title of Erin Belieu's new book of poems, "Come-Hither Honeycomb" (Copper Canyon), is a compact gadget of a phrase that embodies her tinkerer's style of found puns, verbal doodles, and word games. "Come-hither" is both invitation and command, an adjective that evolved from, but clings to, the imperative. It modifies the word it mirrors, "honeycomb," which is both the sweet core of a hive and, it turns out, a tropical fish with a sparkly exterior. And yet those showy scales are a camouflage, a defense against predators. Though its body may narrow to an exaggerated pucker, it wasn't put on the planet to kiss.

Belieu—who grew up in Nebraska, lived for years in Florida, and now teaches at the University of Houston—often explores the relationship between arousal and survival. In "Loser Bait," we find her title in context. "Some of us / are chum"—used for bait, or friend-zoned—while others

> are the come-hither
> honeycomb
>
> gleamy in the middle
> of the trap's busted smile.

The shiny victim lies in the middle of a punched face. Belieu toggles troublingly between screwball comedy and this sort of violence—part Howard Hawks, part Ovid. When a "hapless nymph" enters the scene in this poem, she dreams of a "layabout youth" but fears a "rapey god" who "leaps unerring, stag-like, / quicker than smoke, to the wrong idea."

The foundation of Belieu's language, and also its primary defense, is paradox—the symbiosis of apparent opposites. The poems create insinuations in order to undermine them: the "wrong idea" might, a beat later, be the "right" one. The trapped speaker wonders if she didn't set her own trap:

> For didn't I supply
> the tippy box, too?
> Notch the stick on which
> to prop it?

That tippy box is, perhaps, a poem, the stick a pen. For a woman who makes her living as a poet, these instruments can also form a makeshift household, reliable where others are not. Of a needy ex who seems to have got the better of a divorce, Belieu writes:

> It must be swell,
> to have both the deed and
> the entitlement, for leaners who hold our
> lien,
>
> consumers who consume like
> red tide ripping through a coastal lake.

The modern-day Narcissus "finds himself so very *well*," when he gazes not into a spring—or well—but into the shallows of a kiddie pool. He should be watching the child who belongs in it, but he's enthralled by his own reflection, undone by his own thirst trap.

Belieu's poems often present uneasy pas de deux between rivals, as though strained coöperation were the prerequisite for beauty. She refuses her therapist's "custom-order hindsight," and decides instead "to make like Ginger Rogers / forever waltzing backward down the stairs, / partnered with a man who never liked her." That's a brilliant metaphor for the retrospective method of psychotherapy, guided not by "faith" but by an empirical "process / of elimination." The Fred Astaire-like "partner" is an ex, but also, by transference, the shrink. In "Pity the Doctor, Not the Disease," a weary clinician and a committed drinker have arrived, after years together, at a kind of truce about the costs to the patient's health:

For every one of Belieu's wisecracks, there's something tragic to balance the scale.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE ANDERSON

. . . What he
means to miser, I've come to spend

most lavishly. And I feel fortunate again
to be historically shaky in the maths

On her way out the door, blissfully ignorant of the toll being exacted, she spots another drinker, "the same/busted goldfish in his smeary bowl." She offers a toast in Hungarian: "*Isten, Isten*, meaning,/in translation, 'I'm a god. You're a god.'" No "maths" are required for this elegant equivalence.

The ultimate partner—and antagonist—is one's own mind, surveying "the strange and aging body," a "nemesis without/a zipper for escape." In a sneaky villanelle that opens the volume, the intricate form allows the speaker to act as both hostage and captor, offering her own discounted ransom to recruit her next kidnapper. "You're no great sum," the woman persuaded of her own worthlessness says to herself. Her power has been eroded: an easy catch, she is left with only one choice, between blinking "once for yes, and twice for yes."

The lightness in this collection is sometimes strained, deliberately so. Few poems pass without a joke, and some are, to my taste, jokey. But I can relate; Belieu is roughly my age, and, like me, a teacher and a parent. You have to keep pumping out the jokes until you get a response—a pulse, any vital sign at all. Belieu's corniness is a nervous impulse to counter the unbearable tense silence that surrounds performance. It's also a form of flinching, another manifestation of the tendency, as she puts it, to "confuse the sum that someone/wants from me with the balance of myself." Though these poems are sometimes laugh-out-loud funny, it's the groaners and knee-slappers—poignant for never quite landing—that distinguish Belieu's style.

The notion of "balance" keeps reappearing in this book. It suggests many things: the balance of years left to a person in her fifties, newly tallying, or tallying in a new way; the balance of unspent passion left over when a relationship, or a period of life, ends; the emotional and physical set points of the aging body. It's also, as the kids say, a big mood: for every joke in "Come-Hither Honeycomb," there's something tragic on the other side of the scale. This commitment to minding her own balance means that Belieu, sitting alone on her porch, keeps a "vigil with no/body, before/no sun." Some cats turn up, which

refuse to be
touched,

having learned
their certain distance:

two fixed points
=
the length
of belonging

to no one.

"Length" here is a temporal term; a poet works with lines, but they're powerless to measure the years of life, and of loneliness, that are left.

Belieu's poems gauge the distance of her past, partly as a way of estimating the span of her future. A competitive diver when she was young, Belieu revisits the evolving meanings of that beautiful, dangerous sport. In this collection's final poem, "She Returns to the Water," her comic-creepy coach delivers a pair of shouted maxims: "*The dive starts/on the board . . .*" and "*Rub some dirt/in it, Princess.*" The first is a lesson in poise, the second in abandon. Like the art of poetry, diving requires both. Years later, as an adult skinny-dipping, Belieu recalls her younger self:

. . . How keen
that girl, and sleek,

tumbling more
gorgeous than two
hawks courting

in a dead drop.

Now, floating alone—reduced from "two" to one—she thinks wistfully of her compact elegance, tucking and twisting "like a barber's pole." Her current body is a "fleshy sack/of boring anecdotes/and moles she's lived//inside so long." The future used to be "Infinite," and every "possible outcome"—a win or a loss—seemed equally within reach. But, looking back, she sees this series of promises as veiled threats: "the silvery tissue" of a ring box, like the surface of the pool or the covers of her book, hides "a costly/gift." ♦

POP MUSIC

OLD *SOUL*

Revisiting the sounds of Dusty Springfield.

BY AMANDA PETRUSICH

Springfield could make even the most oversized compositions feel intimate.

In 1968, the British pop singer Dusty Springfield signed to Atlantic Records and began working with the producer Jerry Wexler on "Dusty in Memphis," her fifth solo album and the first she made in the United States. Springfield, who was already a star in the U.K., wore her hair in a voluminous blond bouffant, wreathed her eyes in heavy mascara, and sang in a tender mezzo-soprano. Her voice was effortless, yet there was something warm and vulnerable at the center of each note. "Dusty in Memphis" is now considered a creative apex for "blue-eyed soul"—the teasing sobriquet, coined in the nineteen-sixties, given to Black music performed by white singers—but sales of the album were measly at first, and Springfield made just one other record for Atlantic, "A Brand New Me," in 1970, before leaving the label. A new compilation, "Dusty Springfield: The Complete Atlantic Singles 1968-1971," collects the original, mono mixes of all twenty-four tracks that Springfield recorded during what was arguably the richest stretch of her career.

Springfield was born Mary O'Brien in Hampstead, London, in 1939. In 1960, she changed her name and joined the Springfields, a vocal trio that included her older brother, Tom. "If you're seventeen years old and you're called Mary Isobel Catherine Bernadette O'Brien, and you don't like who you are, you're going to find a mask, or a front," Springfield later said. The Springfields' début LP, "Kinda Folksy!," was full of polite, resolutely cheerful folk standards. Springfield released "I Only Want to Be with You," her first solo single, in 1963. Her performance is exuberant, far more indebted to Motown's girl groups than to the folk revival. I find it almost impossible to feel bad while it's playing. The song appeared on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for ten weeks. Springfield had arrived at a style—soulful, rhythmic, American—that worked for her.

From then on, Springfield was steadfast in boosting Motown musicians. In 1965, she hosted a special Motown-themed episode of the U.K. musical variety show "Ready Steady Go!" and invited the Temptations, the Supremes, the Miracles, and Stevie Wonder to make their first appearance before a sizable British audience. It's possible to piece together most of the episode online. Springfield wears a mod, floor-length dress and occasionally seems giddy. "You should see them move," she says, incredulous, as she introduces the Temptations. At one point, Springfield and Martha Reeves duet on "Wishin' and Hopin'," a track on Springfield's début album, "A Girl Called Dusty," from 1964. If you've grown accustomed to watching oppressively choreographed television appearances, what Springfield and Reeves do will feel especially joyful and free.

Springfield followed the melody and was not inclined toward vibrato or improvisation, which meant that she could make even oversized compositions feel intimate. Her delivery was coy. "Being good isn't always easy, no matter how hard I try," she sings on "Son-of-a Preacher Man," a single from "Dusty in Memphis." It's easy to witness a performer such as Aretha Franklin—still the greatest soul singer of all time—and hear only her vigor and potency. It's far more difficult to perceive Franklin's control, economy, and grace. In 1969, the critic Greil Marcus reviewed "Dusty in Memphis" for *Rolling Stone*. "Most white female singers in today's music are still searching for music they can call their own," he wrote. "Dusty is not searching—she just shows up."

In 1999, Jerry Wexler wrote an essay for the *Oxford American* about meeting Springfield. He had invited her to his home on Long Island to choose the tracks for what became "Dusty in Memphis," and played her seventy or eighty acetate demos. "Most of the day, and well into

DAVID MAGNUS / SHUTTERSTOCK

the night, I became first fatigued, and then spastic, as I moved from floor to player, then back to the shelves, the chairs, and the tables, in what turned eventually into a ballet of despair," Wexler wrote. Springfield wasn't feeling the material. She flew back to the U.K., and Wexler cancelled a recording session at FAME Studios, in Muscle Shoals, Alabama—the same place where, a year before, he had brought a twenty-four-year-old Franklin and launched her R. & B. career.

Ultimately, Wexler and Springfield agreed on eleven songs, and Wexler booked a new session, at American Sound Studio, in Memphis. He enlisted a crackerjack group of musicians. Virtuosity and ease are frequently thought of as antithetical, but the band was as loose as it was perfect; listening to these arrangements feels like drifting downriver on a raft. Springfield, though, sensed the spectre of Franklin hanging over the sessions. In the end, she didn't sing in Memphis, instead recording her parts later, in a studio on Fifty-seventh Street. (The album may as well have been called "Dusty in Manhattan.") Wexler recalled, in a piece for *Rolling Stone*, "She was timorous; almost neurotic about letting a vocal go for fear that it might not meet her empyrean standards. But the thing is: she always met them."

In May, 1969, Springfield and Wexler recorded a cover of Tony Joe White's "Willie and Laura Mae Jones." It's my favorite cut from the Atlantic era—a rich expression of Southern culture. "The cotton was high / And the corn was growing fine / But that was another place and another time," Springfield belts. I'm not sure I've ever been more convinced by a British person singing the word "y'all." Soon after, she recorded an album in Philadelphia, with Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff, and Thom Bell, a trio of soul producers known as the Mighty Three. The title track features a sweeter, more lighthearted Springfield. "Since I met you, baby, I got a brand new style," she sings.

Springfield's relationship to Black culture was complex, particularly during the Atlantic years. It's tempting to think of the interracial recordings made in these studios as representative of some kind of utopian détente for American race relations. (The idea that music could function as a panacea for certain foundational American tensions has lingered in popular music, from Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove" to Janet Jackson's "Rhythm Nation.") Charles Hughes, in "Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race in the American South," questions the notion that any American studio truly represented "a transcendent space in which racial conflict or even identity did not exist." Instead, Hughes argues, these musicians "understood that records could be made in an interracial context and still represent a society that was separate and unequal."

In 1964, Springfield scheduled a brief tour of South Africa. Under apartheid, it was standard to hold separate shows for Black and white audiences, but Springfield's contract stated that she would perform only for nonsegregated crowds. Before each show, Doug Reece, her bass player, surveyed the crowd to insure that it was racially mixed. "Most of the music we played was Black music," Reece told the BBC. "She couldn't live with herself, with her friends, knowing that she was going to go there and do specific concerts for white people." After five shows, South Africa rescinded Springfield's visa and gave her forty-eight hours to leave the country. In a statement, the government said that Springfield had failed to observe "the South African way of life" and instead "chose to defy the government."

It's odd to think of Springfield as defiant—part of the allure of her music is how hard she worked to make it palatable, and how intensely she valued her audience's satisfaction. She recorded six additional singles for Atlantic after the release of "A Brand New Me," but she was unhappy with their commercial performance, and soon quit the label. She released seven more full-length records before dying, of breast cancer, in 1999. (An eighth, "Faithful," was released posthumously, in 2015.) Some of her work from the late seventies and the early eighties is worth seeking out—it includes a few buoyant experiments with disco and a lot of easy listening—but mostly she seemed to be moving away from something. The music she made with Wexler between 1968 and 1971 remains her deepest and most dynamic. One gets the sense that Springfield never really let herself stop thinking about how her work would be received, but, for a brief time, she sounded open to every possibility. ♦

ON TELEVISION

DOUBLE AGENT

When work becomes life, in "Call My Agent!" and "The Bureau."

BY ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZ

"Call My Agent!" owes much to the broad, antic traditions of boulevard theatre.

The fourth season of the French show "Call My Agent!" (on Netflix) has just been released, and fans will be dismayed to learn that it is the last. How can this warm, witty series abandon us in such an hour of need? It may be less than dignified to confess such feelings, I know. A lot of fuss has been made about the question of relatability in art, whether we should think of the made-up people we read about and watch as friends. No, of course not, and not just on aesthetic principle. People love to be repelled; that is why we have "Lolita," "The Sopranos," and the "Real Housewives" franchise. But there's no pleasure like experiencing real affinity for fictional characters, and that is a commodity that "Call My Agent!," with its sparkling comic tone and sincere heart, provides in abundance. The show has made for excellent company since it first came to the United States, four years ago, and though it's not a mistake to end it now, before its charm slackens into cheesiness, it's going to make us lonesome when it goes.

That the show is so likable is itself a joke—a good one. The characters in "Call My Agent!" are film agents, not exactly a beloved caste. They are always demanding, haranguing, cajoling, pleading, manipulating; they live off the talent of others. (The show's French title is "Dix Pour Cent": ten per cent, the cut that the agents take from the clients they represent.) Some of those others—writers, namely—have sought revenge by portraying agents as money-grubbing morons, sleazebags, and pitiful incompetents. Remember how Jerry Maguire was shunned by his colleagues after opting for integrity over the big bucks? Liz Lemon, on "30 Rock," was represented by a small man in a large suit who looked as if he had yet to graduate from middle school and boasted a client roster composed primarily of celebrity dogs. But at A.S.K., the Agence Samuel Kerr, the agents do what they do for the sake of art. Like artists, they are governed by a sense of vocation; they want to pair the best actors with the best directors to make the best movies possible. "We create marriages," Andréa Martel (the wonderful Camille Cottin) says. "Call My Agent!" is a television show that believes in the mortal necessity of cinema, and that is another reason to love it.

Really, though, much of what the agents do is try to prevent divorce. They serve as their clients' babysitters and therapists, their ego-massagers, fire-putter-outers, motivational coaches, and guard dogs. They lie, steal, and bribe, neglect their children and risk abandonment by their partners, all in the name of keeping self-centered actors and maniacal auteurist directors happy. The show's inspired conceit is that the famous people whom A.S.K. represents play themselves, which they do in fine, divaesque fettle. Juliette Binoche fends off a creepy executive at Cannes; Monica Bellucci, sick of the high life, tries to become a normal person; the workaholic Isabelle Huppert takes on too many roles and has to be smuggled across Paris from one set to another like precious contraband. In the current season, Sigourney Weaver shows up, speaking impressive French and insisting that the love interest in her latest film be switched out for a younger, hotter man. (The show, which was created by Fanny Herrero, pointedly comments on the film industry's retrograde gender politics while keeping things light.) When Weaver meets resistance from a sexist director, she breaks into a big, show-stopping dance number to get what she wants. "Call My Agent!" gives hot-shot actors a way to make fun of themselves while celebrating their medium, and

ILLUSTRATION BY YANN KEBBI

they glow under the show's arch, affectionate gaze. Apparently, when Weaver was offered the role, she accepted before reading the script.

The A.S.K. agents are better at making films than they are at making money, a problem that gives the show its through line. The first season began with a calamity: Samuel Kerr, the agency's founder, who, rather un-Frenchly, had not taken a day off in a decade, finally went on vacation and promptly died, leaving the books very much out of order. (A hotel room that Kerr kept for extramarital trysts had been put on the company expense account: French after all.) The agent Mathias Barneville (Thibault de Montalembert), a wily operator with a cracked moral compass and a spectacular head of hair, tried to buy a controlling interest in the company, but the plan went awry when his wife, the scheme's financier, discovered that he had spent two decades hiding a secret daughter, Camille (Fanny Sidney)—an ingénue from the South of France, who, in the series' first episode, surprised Mathias by showing up at the A.S.K. offices incognito and getting hired as Andréa's assistant.

In Season 2, a Trojan horse arrived in the form of Hicham Janowski (Assaad Bouab), a move-fast-and-break-things entrepreneur. He promised the agency solvency but, *hélas!*, had no respect for the traditions of cinema. Hicham was eventually tamed and sidelined, but not before fathering a daughter with his nemesis, Andréa. This was a surprise, most of all for Andréa, a committed lesbian. "Call My Agent!," which features enough illicit interoffice romance to make an H.R. department spontaneously combust, owes much to the broad, antic traditions of boulevard theatre. People are always popping up in the wrong beds, confusing identities, slipping on the banana peel of life. Then they pick themselves up and head gamely off to make more mistakes in the name of passion, professional and otherwise. The purest relationship on the show is between the veteran agent Arlette (Liliane Rovère), a tough old dame, and her dog, Jean Gabin.

Now, in Season 4, the whole operation is teetering fatally on the brink. Andréa's plan to open a new agency, hatched with her endearing schlub of a colleague Gabriel (Grégory Montel), has imploded. Mathias has departed with his paramour and former assistant Noémie (Laure Calamy, a treasure), for a stint at a production company, and his clients have left, too, for A.S.K.'s detested competitor, StarMédia. (Should they pursue a deal with Netflix? Mathias and Noémie wonder. So debasing, but so lucrative.) And there is a new antagonist: Elise Formain (Anne Marivin), one of StarMédia's top agents, a shark in hot-pink lipstick. Elise, who has Andréa's steel but not her spirit, is a classic homewrecker, which only underscores the fact that the office, for these crazy people, has become a family. So what will the agents do, now that it's time to pack it all in? One of the funniest new plotlines involves the young agent Hervé (Nicolas Maury), who, accompanying a client to an audition, finds himself cast by the director instead. Hervé dreads what his colleagues will think when he tells them that he's gone over to the other side and become an actor, one of *them*. When he finally confesses the truth, the scene is a sly pastiche of a coming out. He needn't have worried. More actors means more agents. Everyone will be just fine.

What a relief that the United States, which has for so long exported itself around the world in the form of television, has finally begun to take an interest in TV from abroad. Lately, friends both online and off seem to be talking about another French show, "The Bureau" (on Sundance Now), created by Eric Rochant. If you have been singing the show's praises for years, *chapeau*. If you haven't yet seen it, stop reading and go watch; it's that good.

"The Bureau," too, deals with the fierce bonds of office life and the seductive thrills of acting, though it concerns performance of a very different kind. The show's title refers to the *bureau des légendes*—a fictional undercover operation run by France's foreign-intelligence service, the D.G.S.E. At the show's start, Guillaume Debailly, an agent with the code name Malotru (Mathieu Kassovitz), has just returned home from a mission to Syria, where he lived, for six years, as a French teacher called Paul Lefebvre, gathering information and making contacts under the eye of Bashar al-Assad's regime. But Guillaume discovers that it's not so easy to break character, especially once his lover from Damascus, the historian Nadia El Mansour (Zineb Triki), arrives in Paris to attend secret talks between the Syrian government and the opposition. At great cost to his colleagues, and to his country (let this serve as a reminder that one should keep a healthy distance from the C.I.A.), Guillaume clings to the fiction of being Paul—though who's to say at what point a role, played with total conviction, crosses over and becomes the truth?

Following in the tradition of John le Carré, "The Bureau" succeeds both as an exemplary spy drama and as a critique of the same: it detonates the genre from within. We are taken, among other places, to Iran, where an operation to scope out nuclear progress is under way; to a brutal ISIS encampment; and to Moscow, where hackers do their hacking and the Cold War rivalries are alive and well. Our palms sweat; our hearts pound. And, like Guillaume, we fall in love—with him (Kassovitz, taut as a strung bow, is perfect in the role), and with his colleagues at the dingy, half-lit offices of the D.G.S.E., the smart, dedicated people who have to clean up his mess. But are the bureau's missions crucial to global security, or does all this elaborate play-acting merely give the agents the chance to be part of the drama somewhere else?

Le Carré gave us a West that, without an ideology to guide it, had lost its ideals. The France of "The Bureau," meanwhile, doesn't entirely understand the force of the ideology that it's up against. One of the show's strongest plots deals with the bureau's attempts to track down radicalized French citizens who have gone abroad to fight for ISIS before they return to sow terror at home. There is a kind of grim revulsion among the older guard—how can French people do this? (The ugly question goes unasked: How can *these* people be French?) A sting is arranged. Pretending to be a lawyer, the agent Raymond Sisteron (Jonathan Zaccaï) offers to help the desperate sister of a jihadist in the hope that she will lead him to her brother in Iraq. The woman is a nurse, a pious Muslim and a caring soul. Sisteron likes her; he thinks he can win her trust. It never occurs to him that she has spent her own life forced to wear a mask, and is only waiting for the chance to take it off. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

CONNECTIONS

"The Little Things," "Supernova," and "Two of Us."

BY ANTHONY LANE

It's the little things you do together, as Stephen Sondheim reminded us, in "Company," that make perfect relationships. He listed some of the things: "concerts you enjoy together, neighbors you annoy together, children you destroy together," and so on. There's a whole potential movie, right there, and I was hoping that the new John Lee Hancock film, "The Little Things," might be a riff on Sondheim's acerbic song. No joy. Instead, it's a cop drama about a serial killer, decked out with the customary frills: murders you commit together, clues you try to fit together, ways to get your shit together. And so on.

Rami Malek, Jared Leto, and Denzel Washington in John Lee Hancock's film.

The film stars Denzel Washington as Joe Deacon, known as Deke. The year is 1990, and Deke is a deputy sheriff in Kern County, California, but five years earlier he was part of a homicide squad in Los Angeles. Bit by bit, we work out what went wrong. "Got a suspension, a divorce, and a triple bypass, all in six months. Complete meltdown. He's a rush-hour train wreck." So says one of his former colleagues, and the job of "The Little Things" is to put Deke back on the tracks. Returning to L.A. on an errand, he is invited by his successor, Jim Baxter (Rami Malek), to tag along on a fresh case—the slayings of several women—and to lend his expertise.

Deke, you understand, is not one of those standard-issue sleuths who are contented with fingerprints and blood types. No, sir. He is of a rarer breed—the investigating mystic, self-schooled in criminal divination. Lying on the bed in darkness, in a cruddy hotel room, he gazes at images of the victims tacked up on the wall. Down at the morgue, he converses with a corpse, saying, "You can talk to me. I'm the only friend you got."

Washington is the only actor we got, I reckon, who can get away with this stuff. He is one of the few remaining stars to whom we look for nobility. Having barely appeared on TV since "St. Elsewhere" ended its run, in 1988, he reserves himself for cinema, and though many of his films, like the time-hopping "Déjà Vu" (2006), are rankly absurd, he is never humiliated by hogwash. Nor is he hurried, either in his line readings or in his lordly stroll, by the demands of vengeful action. His smile is bestowed like a blessing (watch him grin at a young woman in a convertible, in "The Little Things," as she sails by on the freeway), and, when presented with material that *is* worthy of his gifts, he takes immediate command. In "Glory" (1989), for which Washington won his first Oscar, we see him, as a young private in a Black regiment during the Civil War, addressing his fellow-soldiers on the eve of battle. He is tongue-tied, yet they stop to listen. Not merely still in himself, he is the cause of stillness in others.

Nothing so fine emerges from Hancock's movie, whose plot, in the home stretch, attains a level of implausibility with which even Washington may be unfamiliar. Nonetheless, there are pleasures to be had, not least in a sumptuous crane shot—the camera inspecting a suspect vehicle, and the red lights on its tail, then ascending to a view of the city and the slow fade-in of dawn. And it's fun to see Washington square off against a brace of performers who could not resemble him less in bearing and tone. The first is Malek, who seems, as usual, to have beamed down recently from Betelgeuse and not yet nailed his earthling disguise. The second is Jared Leto, bearded and coiffed like the Messiah, in the role of a dude named Albert Sparma. Could he be the murderer, despite the lack of evidence against him? Not proven, whatever Deke believes. Is Leto responsible for overacting with unlawful silliness in a built-up area? Guilty.

If you want a story of a same-sex couple, long past their youth, who find their love tested when one of them is struck by a cruel affliction, you're in luck! Right now, there are two such tales on offer, set against very different backdrops. "Supernova," directed by Harry Macqueen, unfolds in the Lake District of Northern England, whereas "Two of Us," which marks the début of a young Italian director, Filippo Meneghetti, was mostly filmed in the southern French town of Montpellier and thereabouts, and is distinctly lacking in pastoral peace.

The sufferer, in "Supernova," is Tusker

ILLUSTRATION BY AJ DUNGO

(Stanley Tucci), a novelist who has early-onset dementia and zero illusions about what lies in store. He's been trying to write a new book, but we glimpse his working notes, and they quickly slide from stormy scrawls to a blank. As the movie starts, we find him and his partner, Sam (Colin Firth), on vacation, squashing their lives—cooking, sleeping, half arguing, sifting through memories—into an R.V., together with an uncomplaining mutt named Ruby. Their travels are meant to conclude with a concert at which Sam, a pianist, will perform, but we know better. This trip is a motorized valediction. Tusker isn't going away, but all too soon the *him* of him will be gone. Journeys end in lovers parting.

Not a lot happens in Macqueen's film, apart from the looming worst. When our travellers camp on the shore of a tranquil lake, no crazies erupt from the woods. The R.V. never breaks down in the middle of nowhere or bursts into flames. The noisiest scene is a party in the house of Sam's sister Lilly (Pippa Haywood), at which Tusker is too overwhelmed to read out a speech of thanks, and what strikes you is that everyone onscreen, without exception, is kindly, concerned, and tenderhearted. The dialogue, likewise, is elegant to a fault, free from the stutters of rage that dementia can provoke. "There will come a time when I'll forget who is even doing the forgetting," Tusker says. Add the fact that Tucci and Firth are two of the most sympathetic actors in the business, and you want to ask, Can any movie survive such an expanse of goodness?

Credit is due to Dick Pope, the cinematographer, who toughens the film and somehow prevents the fabled grandeur of the locations from softening into the pretty. Hence the ominous shots, through the windshield of the R.V., of the road ahead—a twist of gray, shanking through slopes of deep green. Pope is fortunate, too, to have Firth in the frame; as anybody who saw "A Single Man" (2009) can testify, no one can fill a closeup quite so eventfully, keeping everything together, though only just. Saving the wittiest for last, Pope arrives at a composition of Sam and Tusker holding hands, facing each other, in front of a window, with a sylvan landscape beyond, like a pair of blushing newlyweds in Jane Austen. It's as if Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley had come clean, made their apologies to the Bennets, and hooked up. I *knew* it.

To shift from "Supernova" to "Two of Us" is to enter more difficult terrain—a romance, again, but one that is shadowed with hints of a horror flick and a thriller. If Macqueen's film is a fond celebration of openness, Meneghetti's is a demonstration of stealth. Characters lurk behind shower curtains and peek through spy holes in their doors. The opening sequence is a dream, about a game of hide-and-seek that goes awry. And yet the basic setup sounds like a sitcom: Madeline, or Mado (Martine Chevallier), and Nina (Barbara Sukowa) are aging neighbors, dwelling in adjacent apartments, and often dropping round to catch up. What nobody knows is that, for decades, they have been in love.

Nina, the bolder of the two, lives alone, and has nothing to lose. She is growing impatient, urging Mado to sell her place so that they can join forces and migrate from France to Rome. "Nobody gives a damn," she says. Mado, however, is locked into her routine, with a son whom she frets about, a daughter who pays dutiful visits, and a grandson on whom she dotes. The customs of the senior bourgeoisie are not so easily discarded, and, what is more, Mado's children *do* give a damn. Once they discover her secret, they are outraged, as if she and Nina had snapped a taboo—one of the last taboos, you might say, in the liberal West. Such is Meneghetti's most challenging insight: color, creed, sexual preference, and class are no longer a bar to love, but, really, the elderly? How dare they desire?

The thwarting gets ever worse. No roads lead to Rome. Mado has a stroke, requiring the services of a caregiver and then a move to a nursing home; her family forbids Nina to look after her, and the subsequent wrath of Nina (dauntingly portrayed by Sukowa, who was the heroine of Fassbinder's "Lola," nearly forty years ago) is something to behold. Toward the end, she risks everything to rescue her beloved, and the movie turns into a kind of human heist. The revelation here is Chevallier—or, to quote the end credits, "Martine Chevallier of the Comédie Française"—as Mado. Watch her watching the people around her, after the languid strength of her body has failed. Some of them discuss her as if she were absent, or dead, but her sharp blue eyes, following the action, and almost filling the movie screen, show that her wits are intact. So is her force of will. She's all there. ♦

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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 P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, February 7th. The finalists in the January 25th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 1st issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

“ ”

THE FINALISTS

"I think it's just a phase."
Rich Eckmann, New Paltz, N.Y.

"Remind me to close the curtains tonight."
Louisa McDonald, Las Vegas, Nev.

"Wow, it's a rare full-of-himself moon."
Nicole Chrolavicius, Burlington, Ont.

THE WINNING CAPTION

"Once tax season is over, you can go back to being the only child."
Luisa Madrid, New York City

Swedish design with a green soul

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