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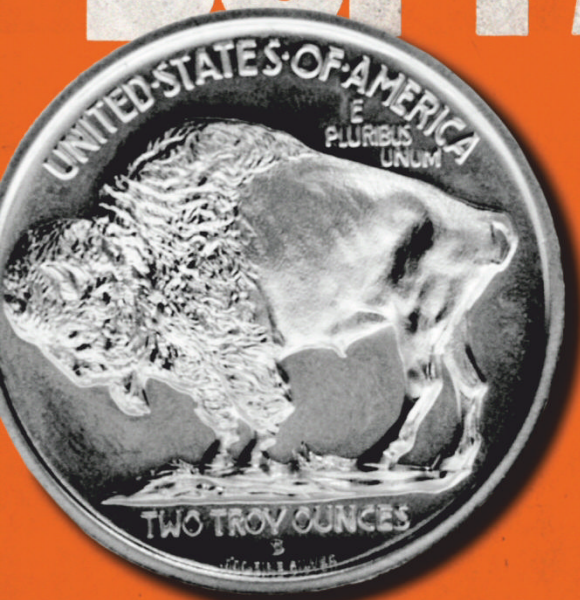
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Twenty-five picks for the next two weeks



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1 For *New York's* latest cover, national correspondent Gabriel Debenedetti followed the Democratic front-runners across Iowa in the weeks leading up to the caucuses (**"Just Another Iowa Caucus to Determine the Future of the Campaign, the Party, and Quite Possibly the Republic," January 20–February 2**). @jerry_jtaylor tweeted, "Excellent insiders view of how each of the leading campaigns (Sanders, Biden, Warren, Buttigieg) sees Iowa shaping up and the subsequent road to the nomination. **One thing's for sure: Sanders's people are awful confident.**" Many readers speculated on the contenders' ability to beat President Trump in the general election. Hhcrum commented, "Trump will eviscerate any of the four leaders ... He did not beat Hillary because he was liked. He beat Hillary because she was more disliked than he was. The same will happen with any of these four." Blutarski disagreed: **"Any of the four, with the obvious exception of Biden, is quite capable of beating Trump. I'd add Bloomberg to that list, too ... But it seems like we are headed toward Biden because it's 'his turn'** (like it was HRC's turn in 2016) and so four more years is looking more and more likely."

2 Matthew Schneier wrote about Michael Barbaro, the host of the *New York Times's* popular podcast *The Daily*, and how the podcast has changed not only the *Times* but also the audio industry (**"The Voice of a Generation," January 20–February 2**). @TonyFross tweeted, "When the NYT envisioned its future, many folks likely anticipated that video would be key. Fewer probably anticipated the impact of podcasting and how *The*

Daily would so quickly establish itself as the (literal) brand voice of the modern NYT." WGBH podcast producer Nick Andersen called it a "v good and v frustrating profile ... I sometimes worry about the hero worship around a commercial product when a public media iteration of the same (Morning Edition! All Things Considered! your local station) hasn't fully stepped in here." And in her media newsletter, Delia Cai joked, "There is a non-zero chance that I, as a red-blooded listener of *The Daily*, am just projecting here, but **did the first half of this writeup of the man, the myth, the voice! of Michael Barbaro ... strike anyone else as relentlessly and hilariously horny?**" Barbaro, weighing in on Twitter, wrote, "The reason why *The Daily* is such a success is not the host, as this headline misleadingly declares. It's the show's incomparably talented, tireless producers and editors. People who write about the show never seem to capture that."

3 Architecture critic Justin Davidson spoke to Frank Gehry about the possibility of retirement, projects that truly excite him, and how the industry has changed in his lifetime (**"In Conversation: Frank Gehry," January 20–February 2**). Responding to Gehry's discussion of classical music, @jmassengale wrote, "Michael Graves used to say that Mozart's work was simultaneously profoundly deep and instantly hummable. The best classical buildings have the same instant likability and depth. Gehry's best buildings can have that too." And responding to Gehry's ideas on architecture as his art form, @Moloknee tweeted, **"Good way to live. Treat everything you do as an art."**

4 In her tribute to comedy writer Anne Beatts (**"Anne Beatts Was Always More Interesting Than John Hughes," January 6–19**), Jen Chaney discusses Beatts's '80s show *Square Pegs*, writing, "At least according to a 1984 *TV Guide* exposé titled 'Anatomy of a Failure: How Drugs, Ego, and Chaos Helped Kill *Square Pegs*,' the show ended messily." Beatts wrote in to contest that account: "Many thanks for the unexpectedly complimentary and perceptive evaluation of my career in your issue. However, I would like to set the record straight on one point. **Despite *TV Guide's* sensationalist exposé, drugs, ego, and chaos did not kill *Square Pegs*. Low ratings did. The highest audience share *Square Pegs* ever received was a 24, which now would make you the queen of Hollywood but was considered inadequate for CBS, then the leading 'Tiffany network.'** Such were the days before DVR and streaming. When I phoned CBS for the overnights the next Thursday morning, the chipper young girl on the phone told me the share was 12, so we had lost roughly half our audience in one week. Then she asked me for a job. I should have told her, with timing like that, stay out of the comedy business. I knew the show was doomed, proving the accuracy of what Lorne Michaels had told me when I asked why his show was called *Saturday Night*: 'So the network can remember when it's on.' The cancellation was confirmed a month later. **I appreciate that there was no place in your article for an elaborate recounting of internecine broadcast struggles from the distant past, and it's true that by that point my ego was in chaos, but no drugs were involved.**"

➔ Send correspondence to comments@nymag.com. Or go to nymag.com to respond to individual stories.

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Intelligencer

INSIDE: Remembering New York's illustrator-in-residence / The case against facial recognition



Fame: Vanessa Grigoriadis

Meghan Markle's
Bigger Dreams
She isn't letting the
royal family get in
her way.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Meghan Markle came in to *Elle* magazine for a conference-room chat, hoping to dazzle the staff with her smarts and savvy. This was fairly common practice for actresses of some fame but insatiable ambition: charm the editors during the meet and greet, and maybe they'd assign a profile, even a cover story. This was not that long ago, and magazines were far from all powerful. But Markle was not yet a duchess, married before 1.9 billion TV viewers—around that time, she was begging friends for introductions to single tech entrepreneurs—and so not yet in a position to complain about, let alone flee from, the scrutiny of what later would turn out to be a torturously hostile media.

In fact, the opposite: Then, she was unusually solicitous of the press's dimming spotlight. During the chat, Justine Harman, an editor at *Elle* at the time and now a podcaster, mentioned she was planning her nuptials, and Markle, who had

long supplemented the actor's lifestyle with the pre-princessy job of freelance calligrapher, asked Harman if she had found someone to do the wedding.

"This is really random, but I met with the actress Meghan Markle from *Suits* and she does amazing calligraphy," Harman wrote her wedding planner afterward. "She offered to do my place cards for the wedding, which I assured her she doesn't need to do! However, she is really eager to help out! Perhaps she could do the table menus?"

Markle's forward nature is part of what makes her so special, and so American, especially for a British audience that has seemed desperate, since she arrived in the middle of its strange national soap opera, to alienate and punish and segregate her for reasons of race and nationality, of course—but also class. The nature of being a princess is hiring other people to do your calligraphy, not the other way around. And while Markles of previous generations—Grace Kelly and Rita Hayworth—represented a fantasy of escape from competitive celebrity into royal ethereality, Markle is very much a creature of her own. She's inverting the Disney dream—one she got, and which wasn't to her liking—of a prince whisking her away to castle; now the princess is ready to make her own empire. She seems to have perceived royalty, ultimately, as merely a stepping-stone back into the game of self-salesmanship she seemed briefly to leave behind.

One imagines it must have been dreadful to be an independent American woman in one's late 30s placed under amber. By marrying Harry, she not only lost her name, her country, and her religion (she had to convert to the Church of England) but also her ability to vote, voice political opinions, work, and go bare-legged without questions about why she didn't wear nude stockings like other royal wives. Most notably, she was prohibited from running her personal Instagram page—effectively killing her control over her digital image. It's a very modern sort of hustler who would see that as the ultimate breaking point.

Markle did not come out of nowhere, and her marriage was not the first sign of transcendent ambition. Before she was a princess, she was a self-made multimillionaire from her roles on film and in *Suits* who managed to put herself in the center of Hollywood after growing up on its margins. Her father, Tom, was a lighting designer when he met her mom, Doria, a makeup trainee, on the set of the popular soap *General Hospital*—and Markle's early life was like a soap, too, with half-siblings bouncing in and out of the house, her mom leaving town through some of her adoles-

cence, and her complicated dad providing for her but not quite understanding how to emotionally connect with her, according to a family member.

Markle hustled hard in her early days as an actor, taking roles like "Briefcase Girl No. 24" on the illustrious Howie Mandel game show *Deal or No Deal*, which required revealing whether a contestant had correctly guessed the amount of money inside a piece of luggage. At 30, she married Trevor Engelson, a film producer of some repute. "Omg, Trevor and I went to college together," says a friend, via text. "He's super cheesy. Like a guy who wears those Adidas slippers to a fancy event. A suit with those shoes." This might not be true, but Markle and Engelson didn't seem like they were afraid of cheesiness: When the new couple married in Jamaica, they reportedly handed out joints to their guests in tiny muslin bags printed with the word SHH.

Cheesy is not a word that comes to mind when describing the royal family (though one might think it about its fans), and Harry, perpetually the hurt child, sent to boarding school at 8 and attending his mother's funeral at 12, seems to have been at least as enthusiastic as Markle about abdication. One doesn't need to be Jane Goodall to read the humanity in some of Harry's many fantasies of escape, issued over decades now—from describing his delight at joining the Army ("I wasn't a Prince, I was just Harry") to musing, "Who among our family wants to be king?"—though in a bizarre development, Goodall herself had recently connected with Harry. Weighing in on his escape, she said, "I know that Prince Harry really felt constrained, and he desperately wants

Most notably, she was prohibited from running her personal Instagram page—effectively killing her control over her digital image.

little Archie to grow up away from all the pomp and circumstance." Of course, how could he not, given the experience of his mother with the British press and the British crown. A tragic toddler victim in that drama, he can play the liberating hero in this one.

These days, Harry and Meghan are living on Vancouver Island, a quiet spot popular with the "newlywed or nearly dead," as locals say, and it's rumored they want a home in Whistler to enjoy the winter, too. Torontonians have been speculating about where Meghan and Harry would settle down were they to live in the city—would they want a cookie-cutter mansion on the Bridal Path, where Drake lives and recently the site of a scandalous double murder? A friend of a friend instead says they have bought in Rosedale, a tonier and more old-school area. Markle's taking hikes through evergreen forests in her Lululemon leggings, carrying a lopsided Archie in an Ergobaby like it's her first time using one, and living in a \$14 million mansion borrowed from an anonymous individual whose identity even the ferocious British tabloids cannot ascertain—a small victory that must have felt, to them, like freedom. It's clear from the recent lawsuits they've brought against the British tabloids and even Markle's wildly inappropriate father, as well as a long-lens cameraman in Vancouver who shot her while she was walking their dogs, that they mean business about guarding their privacy. This will, ironically, be much more difficult outside Britain, which has many prohibitions about where the royal family can be photographed, than inside it.

Regardless of where Markle's being photographed, no one thinks she'll be content

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taking hikes for long. What she seems to want for herself is to become the next Oprah, or Michelle Obama, a new, more discreet Kim Kardashian West, but hopefully falling short of a postdivorce Ivana Trump, newly shorn of her golden position in '80s New York and hawking branded Champagne glasses and baubles on QVC. In other words, what is sometimes called a "goodwill ambassador" but in other contexts a "brand ambassador" by a world that isn't always so able to tell the difference. The path forward from here is not entirely clear, though it is lucky for this type of image-conscious endeavor that the queen did not, as was rumored, rip away Harry and Meghan's Duke and Duchess of Sussex titles and downgrade them to the far less mellifluous honorifics the Earl and Countess of Dumbarton.

For this quest, much effort has been put into securing a new court: In her time as a princess, Markle ran through many assistants, courtiers, and press officers and is now reportedly under the firm hand of the Sunshine Sachs firm and Sara Latham, a redheaded American political adviser. Latham is known to be smart, funny, and extremely competent. "Is she nice?" I ask one of her former colleagues. "She can be," she says. "People who know her love her." Latham was John Podesta's right hand and might be one of the only people who has worked on a presidential campaign (Hillary '16) and in the White House (circa Bill), 10 Downing, *and* the British palace. "Sara has a serious pedigree, and she knows how to play the political game—she survived the Clinton orbit forever."

The PR playbook for Meghan and Harry, says a specialist, is clear. "If I were

them, I'd go away for a while," she says. "They're caught in a hurricane right now, and all the coverage is process and intrigue and gossip. They need to keep a low profile and let this news cycle exhaust itself." When it does, she'd advise them to engage in an activity that can generate a unique series of new photos, rather than grant interviews and "tell their story" on *Ellen* or to Oprah. "They need to roll out a month or two from now with some 'showing, not telling,' and positive-leaning charity stuff. Whatever they're going to do with themselves, they should go do that—go do some Africa and elephants, if that's the plan. Then you feed the news with those images."

But this is advice from another era and assumes that Markle can resist the siren song of the influencer lifestyle. When she became famous in the mid-2010s, she was a master at feeding her online image, hitting as many red-carpet events as possible and taking selfies both at home in states of undress and on her philanthropic missions. And her two best friends, stylist-cum-Canadian one-percenter Jessica Mulroney and fashion-designer-married-into-Hess-dynasty Misha Nonoo, are hustler businesswomen as well. The temptation to put out a line of Duchess of Sussex knitwear must loom large, even if hawking one's brand doesn't feel like it should be the ultimate in self-affirmation.

She's also obviously interested in getting back into Hollywood: In one of the world's great hot-mic moments, Harry was caught at the London premiere for the film of *The Lion King* asking Disney CEO Bob Iger if he could give Markle voice-over work. "We'd love to try," said Iger, an affirmative answer clearly the

only one even a CEO can give a prince. With Hollywood in the midst of a streaming gold rush, and even smaller influencers making deals there off the power of their reach, one could easily see Markle taking any role she wants, like succeeding Gal Gadot as the next Wonder Woman.

Though Caitlyn Jenner recently said she heard Markle was also house hunting in Malibu, if she wants to act again, she can insist on shooting in film-friendly Vancouver or Toronto and send her kids to a Canadian boarding school in the tradition of their now-disgraced uncle, Prince Andrew. The world will be ready to watch; as Netflix head Ted Sarandos recently said, when asked if he would want to work with her, "Who wouldn't be interested?" She could also make millions for a dishy tell-all on the royal family—something the queen is rumored to have worried about when Harry and Meghan were hashing out their agreement to leave.

The trick, for Markle, is going to be marrying her instinct for commercialism with a desire to stay above the fray. The Obamas are perhaps making hundreds of millions post-presidency from socially aware projects at Netflix and Spotify and their own book deals—a model of public engagement suddenly more venerated than philanthropy as practiced by plutocrats or the institution-building Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton did after their presidencies. Harry already has a deal with Oprah and Apple TV to create a six-part doc about mental health, and one could see Markle making the same sort of deal for a doc about one of her causes, like women's empowerment or boosting immigration in Western countries. No longer duty bound to donate all the proceeds of her activities to charity, as she had pledged to do with the Disney voice-over job (her fee went, in fact, to help the cause of African elephants), one could see Markle doing hybrid deals that include some donation to charity and a larger fee she would keep herself. A high-level publicist agrees: "The plan has to be world domination, though I don't think she'll do a lot of commercial stuff for a while, because she wants to prove the British wrong that she's just a brat and a gold digger."

But whatever the advice she's getting, she may want to be wary of waiting too long to sort out her new image—as any influencer knows, the time to monetize is always "now" and the drama of Megxit may dissipate sooner than you'd think. Royalty is forever, celebrity is not. "Our readers love Kate and the way she's embraced being a princess," says a tabloid insider. "On that front, she's a much better actor than Meghan." ■

The temptation to put out a line of Duchess of Sussex knitwear must loom large.

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Lives: No One Looked at New York Like Jason Polan

By Jerry Saltz

AFTER HEARING OF Jason Polan's death at age 37 from colon cancer, I realized I had never seen him not drawing. New York's resident illustrator of modern life was always on a street somewhere in the city, notebook in hand, sitting off to the side watching, a slight smile on his lips. Like some Borges character, he set out to draw "every person in New York" and made it past 30,000 squiggly ink drawings, including the 150 seen here from 2019. His was an art of taking a sunshine pleasure in and appreciating the people, places, and things of the world.



MAN ON TRAIN
11-11-2019

MAN EATING ON G TRAIN
10-29-2019

SPENCER EATING CHOCOLATE OUT OF A SYRINGE AT MAX BRENNER ON BROADWAY
6-14-2019

BIG EARRING LEFT EAR NONE IN RIGHT EAR ALL STARS

WOMAN AT TACO BELL
5-8-2019

CHAD & DANNY ROBERTSON RAIN
4TH STREET & LAFAYETTE
7-9-2019

MAN EATING PIZZA WITH A FORK AT JOE'S ON 14TH STREET
6-7-2019

GOLE ESCOLA! IN THE RAIN ON LAFAYETTE
6-19-2019

MAN ON E TRAIN
11-27-2019

COP WHO JUST PULLED US OVER ON HOUSTON
2-27-2019

THE NEW YORKER
BIG APPLE COMIC CON
12-14-2019

JOHN MAYER ON GRAND STREET
6-21-2019

WOMAN ON TOUR AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART LOOKING VERY CAREFULLY AT THINGS IN DESIGN EXHIBIT
6-3-2019

CHERRY EARRINGS
MAN ON R TRAIN
8-29-2019

CANDICE AT LAFAYETTE
6-18-2019

FAMILY DECIDING ON WHICH JOSH SMITH TURTLES THEY WANT TO BUY AT 4-30-2019

MAN AT TACO BELL
6-19-2019

PETER SOLARI

JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSHER

STAMINA THAT COMES WITH NECESSITY

MAN SLEEPING ON E TRAIN
6-15-2019

HIMAA
9-22-2019

FILM FORUM
LEAVING HOME COMING
HOUSE OF LIBERATION
WALKING ON WATER
ALAIN RECHAI LAST
MEETING GORACHEV
HOMES: ROBBIE FRANK
RECOMMENDING CINEMA
THE THIRD WIFE
EARLY MARENBAO
THE SILENCE OF OTHERS

MAN READING ON T.M.
6-14-

BOY IN HALLOWEEN COSTUME AT TACO BELL 84 & 2ND AVENUE
10-31-2019

SAM JONES

ALLAN HOUSTON AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
11-5-2019

MAN MISSING A TOE ON C TRAIN
6-9-2019

WOMAN ON A TRAIN
11-4-2019

WOMAN & MAN AT TACO BELL 14TH STREET
6-13-2019

MAN SNEEZING OUT FRONT FILM FORUM ON HOUSTON STREET
JUNE 3-2019

MAN ON R TRAIN
6-14-2019

MAN ON 53RD & LEXINGTON
11-11-2019

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IS MY FAVORITE PLACE IN NEW YORK CITY.

DAPPER DAN

AT GUCCI ON WOOSTER
3-26-2019

MAN ON C TRAIN
12-8-2019

ASK FOR CARBONATED FLAVOR SEALS
EJ'S LUNGHEONETTE N.Y.C. ON 3RD AVENUE
OCTOBER 23-2019

"SHE HAS RICE PUDDING"

TWO WOMEN ON A TRAIN
10-12-2019

MAN ON LEXINGTON & 71ST STREET
10-13-2019

TWO WOMEN, MAN JUGGLING A MAN'S HANDS APPLES JUGGLING AND THREE LITTLE PUMPKINS AT LAFAYETTE
10-8-2019

ALEC SOPH ON 71ST & LEXINGTON
11-10-2019

MAN WITH TAGE WALKING DOWN 2ND AT 79
12-15-2019

FRANCH FRIES WITH A FORK

LITTLE GIRL AT EAT HERE NOW 64TH STREET
9-7-2019

(I PARTICULARLY LIKE DRAWING THE GUARDS.)

JASON.

6 TRAIN OFF AT UNION SQUARE TOO QUICK
12-5-2019

KEVIN DURANT AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
11-5-2019

12-10-2019 THREE PEOPLE ON A TRAIN

MAN HELPING UP THE DAUGHTER AT LAFAYETTE SHE IS HOLDING GIARFFE THREE STEPS AT LAFAYETTE STUFFED IN HER MOUTH
10-2-2019

MAN WAITING FOR A TRAIN AT UNION SQUARE
10-18-2019

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WOMAN GREETING PEOPLE IN THE CAFE AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
4-30-2019

I WAS THE FIRST CUSTOMER TODAY.

Thank you!

MAN AT TACO BELL
1-2-2019

ANDRES SERRANO ON BROADWAY
7-2-2019

WOMAN WITH PUPPY AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
6-16-2019

MAN EATING TACO BELL ON E TRAIN
6-26-2019

MAN WASHING WINDOWS ON PRINCE STREET
5-6-2019

YOM & CAS SACHS ROLLING B PRINCE 5-6-2019

ARTWORK: COURTESY POLAN FAMILY



Last year, Delta expanded its use of facial-recognition scanning during check-in and boarding.

Technocracy: Max Read

Banning Facial Recognition Isn't Impossible Courage!

OF THE MANY UNSETTLING ASPECTS to Clearview AI, a shadowy facial-recognition-software company providing users access to a database of 3 billion photographs scraped from social media and YouTube, the one that has most unsettled me is the pervasive sense that there is nothing we can do about it. A quote from one of Clearview's investors, David Scalzo, has been rattling around in my head since I first read it in Kashmir Hill's initial *New York Times* article: "I've come to the conclusion that because information constantly increases, there's never going to be privacy," Scalzo told Hill. "Laws have to determine what's legal, but you can't ban technology. Sure, that might lead to a dystopian future or something, but you can't ban it."

Scalzo is presenting a candid expression of one of the enduring, foundational principles of Silicon Valley: The creep of new technologies is inevitable, and attempts to stop or control it are foolish. Even as the messianic confidence that characterized Silicon Valley

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philosophizing in the '90s and aughts has curdled, the faith in technological inevitability has remained. The sense that we are powerless to arrest—or in some cases even direct—the ceaseless expansion of technology into our lives is somehow even stronger now that we've seen the negative effects of such expansion. In Silicon Valley, zealous techno-optimism has given way to a resigned but impotent techno-pessimism, shared by both fearful critics who can't imagine an escape and predatory cynics like Scalzo, for whom the revelation of an unstoppable, onrushing dystopian future represents, if nothing else, an investment opportunity. "It is inevitable this digital information will be out there," Scalzo later told "Dilbert" creator Scott Adams in an interview. Sure, we might be headed toward hell—too bad we can't do anything about it!

Or can we? There's no corresponding fatalism around regulating (or prohibiting) technologies that aren't computer networks. Many states and cities maintain bans on particular kinds of dangerous weapons, for example. Or take a deadly substance like lead, which used to be discussed in terms of indispensability: "Useful, if not absolutely necessary, to modern civilization," the *Baltimore Afro-American* wrote in 1906, years after it was clear that lead was fatally toxic. Even decades later, lead use was still touted as an inevitability: "One of the classic quotes from a doctor in the 1920s is that children will grow up in a world of lead," historian Leif Fredrickson told CityLab recently. Not unsurprisingly, it took the U.S. decades longer than much of the rest of the world to curb the use of lead paint indoors. But still, we banned it.

Of course, lead paint is not immediately equivalent to facial-recognition technology for a number of reasons. But what they have in common is that surveillance software of this kind, as it exists and is used right now, causes clear social harms. Clare Garvie of the Georgetown Law Center on Privacy & Technology argues that the expansion of facial-recognition technology poses the obvious risk not only to our right to privacy but also to our right to due process and even the First Amendment, given the likelihood that police or corporate use of facial-recognition software at gatherings and protests would have a chilling effect. Worse, the technology is itself still in development and is frequently fed with flawed data by the law-enforcement agencies using it.

The problem is that, as the last decade has shown us, after-the-fact regulation or punishment is an ineffective method for confronting rapid, complex technological change. Time and time again, we've seen that the full negative implications of a given

technology—say, the Facebook News Feed—are rarely felt, let alone understood, until the technology is sufficiently powerful and entrenched, at which point the company responsible for it has probably already pivoted into some complex new change.

Which is why we should ban facial-recognition technology. Or, at least, enact a moratorium on the use of facial-recognition software by law enforcement until the issue has been sufficiently studied and debated. For the same reason, we should impose heavy restrictions on the use of face data and facial recognition within private companies as well. After all, it's much harder to move fast and break things when you're not allowed to move at all.

This position runs against the current of the last two decades, but it's gaining some momentum. As unnerving as the details of Clearview AI's business were, the response to their disclosure from legislators and law enforcement has been heartening. In January, New Jersey's attorney general, who had, without his permission or knowledge, been used in Clearview's marketing materials, barred police departments in the state from using the app. And New York State senator Brad Hoylman introduced a bill that would stop law enforcement use of facial-recognition technology in his state.

In doing so, New Jersey and New York are joining a handful of other states and municipalities enacting or considering bans on certain kinds and uses of facial-recognition technology. California, New Hampshire, and Oregon all currently ban the use of facial recognition in police body cameras. Last year, Oakland and San Francisco enacted bans on the use of facial recognition by city agencies, including police departments. In Massachusetts, Brookline and Somerville have both voted in bans on government uses of facial-recognition technology, and Brookline's state

It's much harder to move fast and break things when you're not allowed to move at all.

senator has proposed a similar statewide ban. The European Union was reportedly considering a five-year moratorium on the use of facial recognition, though those plans were apparently scrapped. And Bernie Sanders and, more recently, Tom Steyer have proposed a complete prohibition on the use of facial-recognition technology by law enforcement.

Such bans are admittedly imperfect and incomplete, covering only particular uses like body cameras, politics, and institutions. One city banning its law enforcement from making use of facial recognition won't necessarily stop a sheriff's department from creating a surveillance dragnet—nor would it necessarily stop a private institution within a city from enacting its own facial-recognition program. For now, the bans don't touch on third-party companies whose data is used by facial-recognition algorithms. (Among the most disconcerting aspects of Clearview is that the company built its reportedly 3 billion-image database by scraping, more or less legally, public images on social networks like Facebook.)

A well-executed ban would require thought and deliberation. (In San Francisco, the initial ban needed to be amended to allow employees to use Face ID on their government-issued iPhones, a feature that didn't seem to have been adequately considered beforehand.) Robust facial-recognition regulation, Garvie says, would need to identify what, precisely, is meant by "facial recognition"—probabilistic matching of face images? Anonymized sentiment analysis?—and any current uses that would fall under that definition. It would also need to take into account the industry's global nature: "Most of the face-recognition algorithms used by U.S. law-enforcement agencies are not made by U.S. companies. So are we prohibiting the sale of that technology within U.S. borders?" Garvie asks. "What about if I go abroad and I'm caught on the face-recognition system in Berlin, is that a violation?" It may be that this is what Scalzo really means by "You can't ban technology"—we as human beings lack the political will to entirely prevent the use or development of it somewhere in the world.

Still, imperfect though they may be, such bans represent the return of an idea largely discarded during Silicon Valley's conquering expansion: that technological change is evitable, controllable, and even preventable—not merely by powerful CEOs but by democratically elected legislatures and executives. It feels a bit blasphemous to say so, as a citizen of the 21st century and beneficiary of the computer revolution, but: We should ban more technology. ■

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Millions of
Americans,
some of them
teens who would
never have picked
up a cigarette,
are now vaping.
Last year's panic
might be the least of
our worries.

Who Thought
Sucking on
a Battery
Was a Good Idea?

BY STEPHEN S. HALL

Photographs by Jonas Bardin

BELLA, on the
corner of
9th Street and
Avenue C.



Dr. Lynn D'Andrea was standing in a small consultation room on one of the upper floors of the Children's Wisconsin hospital this past Fourth of July weekend when a younger colleague on the pulmonary team, Dr. Brian J. Carroll, told her she needed to see a teenager who was having severe difficulty breathing. As Carroll later explained, young doctors are trained to deliver a quick, single-sentence synopsis—a "one-liner"—to the attending physicians in the hospital when preparing them for a new consultation. The one-liner in this case began, "Previously healthy teenager coming in with two to three weeks of fever, weight loss, bilateral chest X-ray findings."

D'Andrea, who had been on call at the hospital that entire week and holiday weekend, at first believed Carroll had misspoken. "I thought we were mixed up," she admitted, "and he was telling me the same consult for a second time."

"No, Dr. D'Andrea," Carroll replied. "There are three of them."

Beginning the previous Monday, July 1, three adolescents had shown up at the hospital with eerily similar and baffling symptoms: extremely rapid and labored breathing ("Breathing like a gerbil," in the words of Dr. Michael Meyer, head of the hospital's pediatric intensive-care unit), weight loss, chest pain, and coughing. Chest X-rays and CT scans were puzzling, too. Instead of a typical picture of pneumonia, in which the signs of infection tend to cloud a particular area on one side of the lungs, these images showed a diffuse "ground glass" pattern on both sides. Even more curious, there was a clean margin—a "sparing"—at the edges of the lungs in the CT images. That wasn't typical of pneumonia but more like some kind of environmental exposure.

"I think the one-liner was the exact same for three patients in a row," Carroll said. "That starts to raise some eyebrows." Whatever caused their illnesses wasn't sudden. They had all been sick for a couple of weeks before something tipped them over into severe respiratory distress, breathing 40 or 50 times a minute. "That rate for a teenager is very close to impending respiratory failure," said Meyer.

Epidemiologists call this a "cluster," a burst of cases occurring together in time and place. It may have been a coincidence that most of the first patients came from the same suburban area west of Milwaukee, according to D'Andrea, but this led the doctors to seek a common factor. And that's when the rest of Carroll's one-liner began to seem more than incidental: "And they're all reporting a history of significant vaping."

In gathering case histories from adolescents, doctors deliberately ask them about drugs, sex, smoking, and other social habits when their parents are out of the room. In this case, D'Andrea and Meyer didn't need to worry. "Those kids were telling me everything," D'Andrea said. "They were scared." Prior to feeling ill, they told the

doctors, they had all been using e-cigarette devices and vaping products containing THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis.

"We felt like we were being sucked into this detective role," D'Andrea told me. "They had all come from sort of the same area, and they were trying to tell us where they got these products from, and we were trying to figure out if these were commercial or repackaged products. And it all got—it got too much." By the end of the weekend, D'Andrea said, she felt "we need to let someone know. Someone is hurting our kids."

IN SEPTEMBER, at the peak of the outbreak that had become an international panic, Donald Trump vowed to take "very, very strong" action to protect the nation's youth from the dangers of vaping, and Melania made curbing e-cigarette use among teenagers a public priority. He wasn't alone: Massachusetts temporarily banned e-cigarettes, Walmart stopped selling them nationally, India banned selling vaping products, and Congress raised the age for buying tobacco to 21.

Four months later, the panic seems to have subsided, as has the original outbreak, which acquired the acronym EVALI, for "e-cigarette- or vaping-associated lung injury." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention believe the epidemic, first identified in Wisconsin, has been tapering off for months; at last count, the agency reported 2,711 cases of lung illness and 60 deaths nationwide. And after CDC scientists fingered vitamin E acetate, an additive often mixed with THC, as the leading culprit in many of the cases, a nation of nicotine vapers breathed a collective sigh of relief.

But scientists warn that EVALI may be just the beginning. Factors other than acetate, they say, may have been at play in last fall's outbreak. About 14 percent of EVALI cases are reportedly nicotine only, and the most recent FDA analysis of vaping products used by 89 patients found that in 26 percent of cases, no THC was detected at all.

Officials are even more worried about a quieter, larger vaping epidemic: More than a million teenagers, many of whom might never have picked up a standard cigarette, are now addicted to nicotine and regularly sucking on the end of a battery—the long-term safety of which remains almost a total mystery. It took decades of research to prove the devastating health effects of cigarette smoking, which kills nearly half a million people each year. Widespread vaping is just a few years old and has already produced one public-health panic. It may not be the last. "The population effects of e-cigarette use may not be apparent until the middle of this century," one group of researchers recently warned. And CDC scientist Brian A. King admits, "We're certainly in the midst of a broad, population-based experiment, if you will, in terms of the long-term health effects of these products." That's science speak for *We have no idea what's going to happen.*

A decade ago, teen smoking was in a 20-year decline. Then vaping arrived. In the past several years, high-school students have become so comfortable with the habit that they no longer feel the need to hide it from their parents, many of whom are now vaping too. You almost can't walk down the street in any American city without seeing someone take a draw from a pen. A 2019 CDC report found that over a quarter of American high-school students had vaped in the past month. All told, an estimated 8 million adults and 5 million middle and high schoolers are now doing it.

Ever since e-cigarettes began to become popular, two assumptions have governed public thinking about them: that they pose little or no health risk, at least to adults, and that they could help smokers quit their demonstrably unhealthy habit. These beliefs gained legitimacy from a widely cited article on the health risks of e-cigarettes published in 2015 by Public Health England, a U.K. government agency; the review, which drew on 185 citations, concluded that vaping, which eliminates tar and many of

the carcinogens in cigarettes, was “around 95 percent safer” than traditional smoking. That message—and, just as important, its scientific framing of risk by comparing e-cigarettes to regular ones—has permeated the public, policy, and political conversations about vaping for the past five years.

Those British findings are now dismissed as “ludicrous” by Jeffrey E. Gotts, a pulmonologist at the University of California, San Francisco. “The 95 percent, they just appear to have pulled that number out of thin air,” says Gotts, who was the lead author of a comprehensive article on the subject in *The British Medical Journal* last September that undermined nearly every scientific assumption about the health risks of vaping. Citing 193 research reports and reviews, Gotts and his colleagues concluded there is “insufficient” evidence to say the most basic thing about vaping—that it is safe. Well-conducted studies, the researchers said, “show measurable adverse biologic effects on organ and cellular health in humans, in animals, and in vitro.”

“People are conducting a huge experiment on themselves about what kind of lung disease you can produce from all these different chemicals that you’re putting into the lung,” Gotts says. “And the bulk of the evidence is increasingly that these devices have new and unpredicted toxicity.” That’s because, while vapes eliminate tar, there are plenty of other chemicals to worry about: CDC scientists have already cited heavy metals like lead, ultrafine particulates, and carcinogens in vaping aerosols as “harmful,” but other research has suggested that flavoring agents, while safe to ingest, might be toxic when inhaled, and even essential ingredients in e-juices, such as propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin, have been shown to cause lung dysfunction in mice after long-term exposure. On top of which, the Mayo Clinic has highlighted evidence of chemical burns in users’ lungs. The THC use driving the recent outbreak, Gotts adds, represents a massive behavioral change that could have long-term public-health consequences. “A lot of people are using their lungs as a sewer to get high in a way that really has never been seen before. People are just experimenting with all kinds of crazy new chemicals, and they’re just putting them all in their lungs and seeing what happens.”

With two epidemics already under way (the “smaller” one, spotted by the doctors in Milwaukee, involving the lung injuries and death associated with vaping THC products, and the second, larger one involving underage vaping by a pediatric population with known present-day harms to brain development), a third is plausibly looming. It could involve an even greater population: former teen and adult vapers alike, for whom chronic use may cause respiratory disease. “The risk is higher than has been estimated, at least by some groups,” says Gotts, “and is unknown. It is unknowable, in fact. That, I think, is the key thing: It’s unknowable. It’s going to take 20 or 30 years to know whether there’s toxicity from it, the same way it did for cigarette smoke.”

Over the past few months, in trying to address the national panic about EVALI, public-health officials have tiptoed around the scientific—and political—trip wires, warning people to avoid cartridges containing THC (especially from “informal” sources) while asking the public merely to “consider” refraining from other vaping products. Casual observers might have concluded that the crisis had been resolved, that vaping is generally safe, and that the new regulatory scrutiny will keep it that way. But President Trump’s watered-down policy to ban flavored vaping juices, announced on New Year’s Eve, has been panned by many public-health groups. A long-awaited guidance from the Food and Drug Administration in early January, laying out its plan to regulate the vaping industry, was dismissed as “pathetic” by former FDA official Eric Lindblom, who had pushed for strong FDA regulation of vaping nearly ten years ago, during the Obama administration, until he left the agency in disgust. “The whole situation is just a national tragedy.”

MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, Stanton A. Glantz received a visit in his office at the University of California, San Francisco, from a couple of young men who wanted to live the Silicon Valley dream: disrupt a major industry and make a lot of money. Glantz heads the school’s Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education. The two visitors, James Monsees and Adam Bowen, were graduate students in the design school at Stanford University (they would receive their degrees in 2006 and 2005, respectively) and had come to sound him out about a new product they were developing: an electronic cigarette. “We have this great idea for an off-ramp to smoking: harm reduction,” Glantz recalls them saying. “What do you think of it?”

Like so many experts at the dawn of the vaping age, Glantz thought the idea sounded both technologically clever and, from a public-health standpoint, potentially appealing. Monsees and Bowen showed him an early prototype of a device that was in essence a pen-size vaporizer powered by a rechargeable battery that heated up a liquid containing nicotine and created an inhalable aerosol without any of the tar or other toxic by-products unleashed by burning tobacco. Glantz admits he was intrigued: Compared with those of traditional cigarettes, the health risks of vaping could be minimal, while the impact of weaning smokers off cigarettes could have a huge public-health impact.

“You know, it’s an interesting idea,” Glantz remembers telling them. “Maybe it will work.” But he felt they needed evidence that the devices posed no health risks. And he added, “I think you’re going to have to worry about two things: kids and dual use.”

By “dual use,” Glantz meant that smokers might not actually quit smoking but would satisfy their nicotine habit by getting it both ways, possibly exposing themselves to even more severe long-term health consequences. By “kids,” of course, he meant that teenagers might inevitably be tempted by a cool, “disruptive” new technology, just as they had long been tempted by the transgressive thrill of underage smoking.

“Well, no, no, no,” Glantz recalls them saying. “We just don’t think that’ll be a problem ... because no kid would want to use this, and this is for adult smokers trying to quit, and blah, blah, blah.”

“Everybody has 20/20 hindsight,” Glantz says now, “but if you go back in time to when they were first appearing, the idea that an e-cigarette might be a good thing was not insane. That is no longer the situation. Now I think they’re about as dangerous as a cigarette. They massively expanded the tobacco epidemic by bringing a lot of low-risk kids in.” And the hope that vape pens might become a substitute for cigarettes has eroded. He adds, “The work we’ve published to date shows that, on average, smokers who use e-cigarettes are *less* likely, not more likely, to quit smoking.”

In 2007, Monsees and Bowen founded a company called Ploom, their initial foray into the e-cigarette business. Ploom didn’t make a huge splash, but one of its products did—a vaping device called the Pax Vaporizer, which especially caught on with cannabis users. Monsees and Bowen sold their Ploom brand to a big tobacco firm, Japan Tobacco International, rechristened their own company as Pax Labs, and later launched a separate one called Juul Labs, which was dedicated to their signature nicotine-based e-cigarette. Part of Juul’s spectacular success—the company achieved \$10 billion in capitalization faster than any other company in history, including Facebook—was due to the clever chemical engineering of its flavored juices, which deliver exceptionally high nicotine content without the harsh experience of smoking. Another part was a shrewd use of social media, but perhaps the biggest was staking a claim on that market before the regulators at the FDA could get their act together.



WIND †

“My grandpa smokes, so growing up around that I told myself I wouldn’t touch cigarettes. Junior year, my best friend was like, “You should get Juul.” Now I’m at a point that when I don’t have the vape, it’s all I can think about.”



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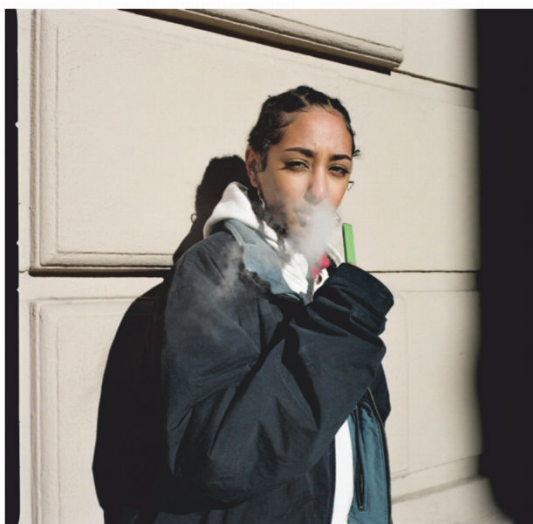
† MEMPHIS



† LIV



† NIFEMI



† LUJAYN



† TEJ

Jonas Bardin recently photographed New Yorkers age 18 to 23 who vape nicotine. See the full portfolio, along with additional photographers' portraits from California and Missouri, on @nymag's Instagram story.

“The e-cigarette epidemic we’re facing,” says Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, “is a history of missed opportunities.” In 2009, Congress passed the Tobacco Control Act, which authorized the FDA to regulate tobacco-based products like cigarettes and smokeless tobacco; the law grandfathered in existing products but did not include e-cigarettes. So when the FDA tried to regulate them as a drug, a federal court ruled in 2010 that the agency had no jurisdiction to do so unless companies claimed their e-cigarettes had therapeutic value (that is, helped smokers quit their habit). If the FDA wanted to regulate them, it would have to create a new federal rule.

That regulation, the so-called Deeming Rule, took the better part of five years to make its way through the federal bureaucracy. The final version required e-cigarette companies to submit an application to the FDA establishing that a new product benefited the public health before they could bring it to market; the process was known as a “premarket tobacco application,” or PMTA. The acronym isn’t important, but the deadline for the application was—companies could freely enter the market with new vaping products, flavored or otherwise, without providing any proof of safety or public benefit until the deadline kicked in. But the deadline kept moving back, and the regulations kept getting watered down.

As part of the Deeming Rule, for example, the FDA had proposed strict controls on the use of flavorings in tobacco products, including e-cigarettes—the same issue that has roiled the Trump White House in recent months. But as investigations by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* revealed, during final consideration of the regulations, the federal Office of Management and Budget met with 100 opponents of the Deeming Rule, including tobacco-industry lobbyists, vaping proponents, and small-business organizations, while meeting only a handful of times with public-health groups. When the Obama OMB released its “edited” version of the FDA regulations in May 2016, the White House had gutted the flavoring rule—the entire section had disappeared.

This bowdlerized Deeming Rule went into effect on August 8, 2016. That meant the deadline for vaping companies to submit their premarketing tobacco applications would be August 2018—eight years after the initial federal-court decision. Until then, companies could release new products with functionally no oversight or regulation at all. And shortly after Scott Gottlieb became FDA commissioner during the Trump administration, he pushed the application deadline back even further, to 2022—“a horrible mistake,” in Lindblom’s estimation. (Public-health groups filed a lawsuit to speed up the process, and a federal judge imposed a new deadline; it comes up in a couple of months, on May 12, 2020, and the pro-e-cigarette blogosphere is already predicting a “vaping apocalypse.”)

“The net result,” Myers says, “was that e-cigarette companies introduced a slew of new products to avoid immediate regulation. James Monsees from Juul acknowledged that it rushed to market a host of different flavored products specifically to avoid that problem.” Between 2011 and 2018, during this bureaucratic pause in regulation, e-cigarette use among high-school students increased from 1.5 percent (roughly 220,000 kids) to 20.8 percent (more than 3 million). By that point, then-FDA commissioner Gottlieb had declared it an “addiction crisis.” In Wisconsin between 2014 and 2018, e-cigarette use among high-school students increased 154 percent, according to state health officials.

But it wasn’t just Juul. What resulted was a Wild West of unregulated, disparate products: different devices (vape pens and dab pens and “mods,” which allow users to customize their vaping experience); different “tanks” (to hold e-liquids); different coils (to heat the liquids to different temperatures); different e-liquids (some manu-

factured, some mixed like home brews); and different flavoring components (all with different chemical properties), some legal (containing nicotine in varying amounts), some illegal (containing black-market THC). In terms of product safety, it was like a huge chemistry experiment with no controls and dozens of variables, and the guinea pigs were American consumers.

“We are all on our heels here, trying to do relevant science,” Gotts says. The industry “is innovating at the speed of Silicon Valley, and we’re moving at the speed of Bethesda and NIH and a century-old academic enterprise.”

IN WISCONSIN, as elsewhere, physicians, school officials, and anti-tobacco organizations had seen signs of trouble with vaping for years. “I would say in the school year of 2016 to 2017 is when we started to see kids in the area using vaping devices and bringing them to school, and the schools started to panic,” says Ashleigh Nowakowski, executive director of a nonprofit called Your Choice to Live, which stages about 200 educational events a year in the Midwest to warn about the dangers of smoking, drugs, alcohol, and now vaping. “It really escalated the following year from a few students using in school to a lot of students using in school. That’s about the time that the pod systems, like Juul, and Suorin, got popular. They have a lot less cloud production, so they’re easier to conceal in school.” Parents were clueless, she says, and so were educators. One teacher confessed to Nowakowski that he had unwittingly recharged a student’s vaping device in his classroom, thinking it was a USB drive.

Barbara Calkins, a pediatrician in a suburban Brookfield clinic affiliated with Children’s Wisconsin, began to notice symptoms of nicotine addiction in her patients, who needed to vape the moment they woke up in the morning and compulsively vaped during school days in bathrooms and locker rooms. She has even detected an effect of vaping on vital signs: In several recent cases, teenagers coming in for routine physicals displayed markedly elevated blood pressure and heart rates. The abnormalities were so alarming Calkins recommended that her patients see a cardiologist, at which point they admitted they’d been vaping right before their appointments.

In April 2018, once vaping had taken off in the schools, a reporter from a local Kenosha, Wisconsin, newspaper interviewed an 18-year-old senior at Westosha Central High School who made no secret of his desire to become a millionaire. He described how he had started a lucrative business selling high-end athletic shoes out of his home in Paddock Lake, where he lived with his brother; his mother, Courtney (a local real-estate agent); and his grandfather Tom Blount. “I haven’t asked my parents for money since sixth grade,” Tyler Huffhines told the *Kenosha News*. “I like making money. I’m a businessman, and the hustle is my lifestyle.”

The month before, Jacob Huffhines, Tyler’s older brother, had been arrested for—and would later plead guilty to—selling cocaine, landing him on probation. But the Huffhineses were well known in their tight-knit community, according to Kenosha County sheriff David Beth, whose children attended the same high school as Tyler, and he says they projected a lifestyle of privilege and wealth. Courtney was a bubbly presence on social media, tweeting everything from new real-estate listings to New Age-y homilies to a plea to neighbors to look for her father’s missing cat. She described herself on her real-estate website as “Envisionary Coach, Mentor & Trainer, Realtor, Dream Achiever, Valiant Attitude, Eclectic Mind & Thinker, Chance Taker ... Eternal Optimist of Life!”

The interview in the *Kenosha News* appeared on April 26, 2018. What Tyler Huffhines neglected to mention was that he had launched a different kind of entrepreneurial venture three months earlier, memorialized with an Instagram post on January 28. That was the day he started what Sheriff Beth later described as “prob-

“People are using their lungs as a sewer to get high.”

ably one of the largest” drug rings, at the time, in the country dedicated to selling illegal black-market vaping cartridges containing liquid THC, which is illegal in Wisconsin.

Vaping and cannabis were a match made in high-tech heaven. Recreational marijuana is legal in only 11 states, but cannabis is vaped in all 50, and the distilled liquid form of THC was perfect for vaping (more than 80 percent of people hospitalized during the current outbreak reported vaping THC). “One hit of THC oil from a vape pen is like five hits from a joint,” says Peter Hackett, who runs Air Vapor, a vaping-supply business based in California. “That’s the wow moment. It’s discreet and it doesn’t smell, so it takes away the social and legal stigma.” And it was easy for dealers to get. As the cannabis-news website Leafly documented in a recent investigation, black-market THC entrepreneurs could obtain THC oil; colorful, candylIKE counterfeit packaging; and other vaping paraphernalia during one-stop shopping in Los Angeles.

At first, the drug ring Huffhines is alleged to have started purchased prefilled THC cartridges and sold them in lots of 100, police say; at some point, he switched his business model and started to purchase bulk quantities of distilled THC oil and empty cartridges. He hired ten people, he later told police, and initially paid them \$20 an hour to manually load vaping cartridges by injecting THC oil into them with a syringe. His crew worked seven-hour days and filled out time cards. Tyler advertised his merchandise to associates via Snapchat. The group even created some swag to share with people in the distribution network, according to police: T-shirts and sweatshirts, in red, white, and blue models, showing an outline of the state of Wisconsin with the logo WISCO BAG BOY.

ON JUNE 11, PATIENT NO. 1 of the Milwaukee cluster showed up at Children’s Wisconsin, although no one recognized it at the time. The teenager came in experiencing respiratory failure. The doctors ruled out one possible diagnosis after another: “Well, it’s not infectious. It’s not rheumatologic. It’s not oncologic. So it’s gotta be an exposure of some sort. Where else do you see this?” There was one group, Dr. Michael Meyer realized, that did exhibit a similar set of symptoms: blue-collar workers who suffered inhalation-type injuries on the job after having been exposed to dangerous chemicals. This teenager wasn’t a blue-collar worker, of course, but he was a BMX biker—a dirt-bike athlete who rode in sandy environments. Could the lung illness be related to the dust kicked up by biking? They couldn’t tell. Dr. Brian Carroll, the pulmonary fellow, had just returned from a medical conference where vaping was a hot topic, however, so he suggested that the physician handling the case ask about it. The biker had indeed been a vaper; it went into the chart.

Then the Fourth of July rush occurred. “Once we had four kids all here at the hospital at the same time,” Meyer says, “then it became pretty clear that there was something going on.” Three of the first

five cases came from Waukesha. The doctors also became more savvy in their questions about vaping, Carroll says, “asking for vaping types and brand names and what cartridges are you using.”

On July 11, patient No. 6 showed up at Blue-mound Pediatrics, a suburban clinic affiliated with Children’s Wisconsin. Dr. Jennifer Schreiber knew that the patient, a young woman of 17, had gone to an urgent-care facility several days earlier complaining of chest pain and trouble breathing. By that Thursday, her breathing rate was extremely rapid (60 times a minute), and her oxygen level was extremely low (60 percent instead of a normal 100). Schreiber remembers thinking, as soon as she stepped into the exam room, “Here

was a previously vibrant and healthy child who I now feared might stop breathing right in front of me.” The girl was so close to respiratory failure that Schreiber ordered an ambulance immediately and called the emergency room at Children’s to alert the doctors to the imminent arrival. Once she had stabilized in the intensive-care unit, Patient No. 6 told Carroll, “If I had known anything like this could potentially happen, I never would have touched these things.”

Around the same time, two parents showed up one evening with their son at the Waukesha Police Department. The parents had uncovered a number of THC cartridges in the son’s bedroom, according to Waukesha detective Justin Rowe, along with roughly \$2,000 in cash. On the basis of that initial tip, Rowe and his colleagues began an investigation into a possible drug ring distributing illegal THC vape cartridges in local high schools.

In early August, as the Waukesha detectives worked their way up the levels of the drug ring, a new tenant took possession of a two-story condominium in the Bristol Bay subdivision of Kenosha County, one of the new suburban tracts reclaimed from the prairie west of Interstate 94. The condo had been rented in the name of an unsuspecting resident of Nevada whose identity had been stolen, according to police. The real-estate agent who arranged the rental was Courtney Huffhines. Her son Tyler had moved his drug operation there.

For weeks, Waukesha police had been monitoring Tyler’s Snapchat posts, and in mid-August, once it became clear the operation was based in Kenosha County, on the Wisconsin-Illinois border, Rowe and his partner drove down to the village of Bristol to check it out. They spotted, by chance, a white BMW reputedly driven by Tyler Huffhines, and they followed it to the condominium in Bristol Bay. Once they knew the address, the detectives went on the real-estate website Zillow and compared online photographs of the interior of Unit 201 with the layout they observed in one of Tyler’s Snapchat videos, which showed the interior of a domicile with boxes, tote bags, and garbage cans full of THC vaping cartridges. “The camera then panned to a desk,” authorities later stated in a criminal complaint, “which containing [*sic*] money counter and a substantially large stack of money.”

On August 23, the CDC held a press briefing to reveal that vaping was associated with a mysterious lung disease that had affected 193 people, mostly young, in 22 states; the agency attributed one death to the unusual lung injuries. If the news bothered Tyler Huffhines, it wasn’t apparent from Snapchat. Several days later, on August 28, he was posting videos of himself sitting in the first-class section of an airplane. An informant had tipped off police that Huffhines was going to California with \$300,000 in cash to buy a consignment of THC oil over the Labor Day weekend. Police knew he was in Los Angeles, Rowe says, and he continued to post photos of his weekend in California before flying home. (Two other “Wisco Bag Boys” flew out on one-way tickets, according to the

(Continued on page 91)

INTRODUCING:

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MORE

FEEELINGS

Some scientists believe we have
infinite emotions,
so long as we can name them—
and so we did.

Introduction by Melissa Dahl

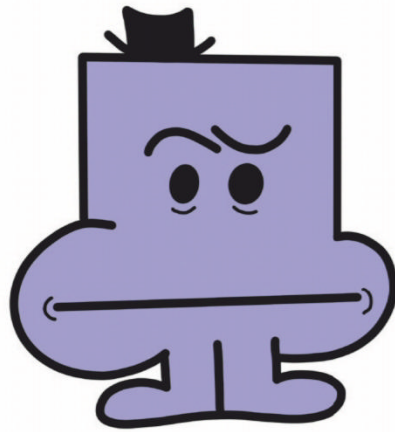
Illustrations by Zohar Lazar

Itchy Teeth



The restless urge to explode your own life by doing something that can't easily be undone. Like getting married, moving out of state, getting pregnant, or starting a fistfight. Lesser teeth-itchers: a dramatic haircut, a different job, a large tattoo.

Rickitickitembo



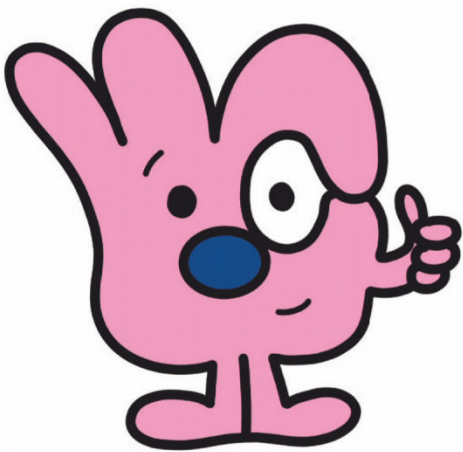
The wilted feeling of realizing that you've bullshitted your friends enough about how great they're doing and how beautiful they look that you no longer believe anything anyone says, pretty much.

Liegasm



The sick pleasure of knowing you're lying and getting away with it. You feel it a little bit in your bellybutton. A quickening of the heart; a bit of bile in the throat; a hot, wicked shame.

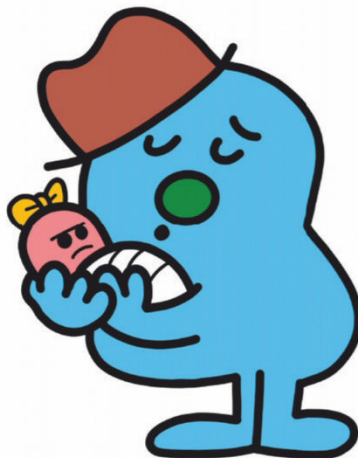
Yesokasity



The feeling of knowing you have to do something and, instead of putting it off, you just do it.

Pa-Su

(Parental Superiority)



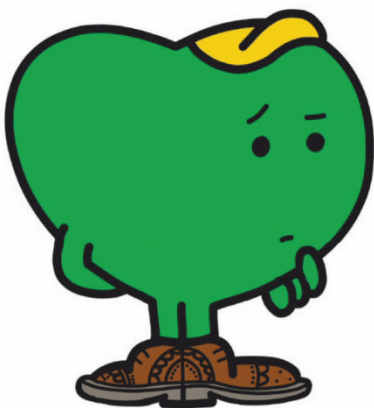
A feeling of pride and relief, mixed with gloating and an undeserved sense of responsibility, when your kid isn't as bad as somebody else's kid.

Ventastic



The fabulous and exhausting feeling right after a particularly animated and energetic venting session.

Jealousy



The feeling of being jealous of someone while also having a crush on them. You want to be them, and you want to sleep with them. The worst of all feelings. Possibly the reason some murders are committed.

Mid-Meal Regret



An emotion for eating one thing while simultaneously knowing you'd rather be eating something else.

WIDGI

(Wish I didn't get involved)



Dread and regret, coupled with a desire to flee, disappear, or take back your statement. A sinking feeling that no good outcome is possible. Irritation at your failure to correctly predict the outcome of your situation.

Sometime last year, I came across the word *hangxiety*, a neologism for hangover-induced anxiety. I cringed when I read it; it felt so phony.

The most mental distress I'd ever experienced during a hangover was some light teasing in a group chat. And then, last fall, the morning after a night of drinking, I woke up with a racing heart and a constricted feeling across my chest, as if I'd been sleeping under a dozen weighted blankets. I thought about the things I'd said and done the night before, and the physical sensations intensified.

This happened again, and then again. I haven't had a hangover in months, largely because I'm terrified of them now. Was this always the way my brain and body responded to hangovers? Or did learning about hangxiety somehow influence the way I experience a hangover? I'd like to think I'm not that suggestible, but some emerging, somewhat controversial research on how and why we feel our feelings argues that language doesn't just describe a feeling. It can also change it.

It feels like I know what a feeling is. Across the centuries, both ancient philosophers and modern psychologists have arrived at the same basic understanding that there are a limited number of discrete human emotions, preset by the human psyche. The Confucian text *Liji* lists seven feelings thought to be innate: joy, anger, sadness, fear, love, hate, and desire. Fifteen-hundred years later, René Descartes echoed this idea when he named wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness as the six "primitive passions." In the 1970s, the renowned psychologist Paul Ekman identified six "basic emotions"—you may recognize some of them from the cast of Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out*: happiness, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise. (Sometimes contempt gets thrown in there too.) More recently, Ekman and other researchers have bumped the number up to 27, adding emotions like aesthetic appreciation, empathetic pain, nostalgia, and awkwardness.

The point is, according to a few millennia of inquiry, there are finite ways to feel. Sometimes it may seem as if we're experiencing a "new" emotion, but look more closely and you'll find it's the known emotions layered on top of one another. A newfangled emotion like FOMO, for instance, is probably something like envy layered on top of fear, maybe with a little sadness. Emotions are what they are, and they exist the same way in each one of us, whether we recognize them for what they are or not.

That's one way of looking at feelings, anyway. The wildest thing about the study of human emotions is that researchers haven't even agreed on a definition of what they're studying. (This is not unique

among the social sciences; researchers who study personality or intelligence fight similar semantic battles.) *The Neuroscience of Emotion*, a 2018 summary of the field's current state, listed six leading theories of what emotions are. Five of those differ in detail, but they agree broadly that an emotion is an objective state that manifests in a variety of reliable, measurable ways, including behavior, facial expression, heart rate, blood pressure, and stress-hormone levels. And then there's the sixth theory: constructed emotion.

This theory, introduced in 2006 by Lisa Feldman Barrett, a neuroscientist and psychologist at Northeastern University, argues that emotions are not just biological entities. It's true, Barrett says, that a handful of physiological feelings are distinct and measurable. She separates these into two categories: calm versus jittery (what scientists call "arousal") and pleasant versus unpleasant (what scientists call "valence"). But these biological signals aren't emotions. An emotion, she says, is how our brains interpret those sensations using our culture, our expectations, and our words.

This is an irritating, borderline unscientific view to many of Barrett's colleagues. Scientists like precision. They like taxonomies like kingdom-phylum-class-order-family-genus-species and sorting each new discovery into its proper taxon. "It will surely be the case that our current emotion categories will be revised, and likely will need to be subdivided," the

authors of *The Neuroscience of Emotion* write in a critique of constructed-emotion theory. "But we argue strongly that this is an empirical task of scientific discovery, not a process of social construction where we can just make up any emotion categories we like." Barrett disagrees. It's not that emotions aren't real. They're very real. It's just that they're also made up by your brain.

Brains love concepts. When you encounter something you haven't experienced before, your brain doesn't ask itself, "What is this?" It asks, "What in my experience is this similar to?" Cognitive scientists call this "conceptual combination," and it is thought to be "one of the human brain's most powerful abilities," Barrett says. We start understanding our surroundings this way from infancy. Barrett tells me about a well-known type of experiment in which researchers show babies a series of novel objects: Let's say you start with a squishy blue toy. "You say to the child, very intentionally, 'Look, sweetie, this is a blump,'" Barrett says. "And you place the blump down, and it squeaks." Then you show the baby a round, feathery orange object, and you say again, "Look, sweetie, this is a blump." You put the blump down, and it squeaks. Finally, you show the baby a third toy, maybe a spiky, shiny orange triangle. Again, you say, "Look, sweetie, this is a blump." And the baby will now expect this thing to squeak. It's how our brains make sense of everything, including, Barrett and other constructed-emotion proponents argue, our own feelings.

To a layperson, it's fascinating to think that emotions are more subjective than we might have imagined. To neuroscientists, it's more than a philosophical debate. The way they decide to define emotion shifts the way they search for treatments for emotional problems, including mood disorders like depression or anxiety. Barrett argues that if emotions were simply biological, then you'd expect an emotion to look similar in every person's brain. And yet, across multiple studies, researchers have scanned the brains of people who all claim to be experiencing the same emotion, such as fear, and the fMRI readouts from those studies don't have much in common.

David J. Anderson, co-author of *The Neuroscience of Emotion* and a neurobiologist at the California Institute of Technology, points out that, in mice, he has been able to evoke defensive behaviors, like freezing or flight—which animals (and people) typically show when

BIG MOOD

WE ASKED DOZENS OF WRITERS TO IDENTIFY NEW EMOTIONS. HERE'S WHAT THEY CAME UP WITH.

Sex Poisoned

The state of being convinced after intimacy that you have romantic interest in someone you objectively do not.

Maybe the sex poisoner is 20 years younger than you and took you home to his basement apartment, where he sleeps on a bare mattress on the floor. Perhaps he spent the next morning telling you about his problems with his mother, Adderall, or being expected to correctly pronounce “foreign” words. You remember that when you were gathering your clothes you saw a copy of *The Game* slung on his sticky bedroom floor, that he used the word *gay* as a term of abuse—but when you’ve been sex poisoned, it doesn’t matter. It’s like you’ve been hit on the head by a sexual hammer; you forget all the terrible things about him. You make excuses for his bad manners: *Maybe he was nervous, and that’s why he said all that stuff about his “insane” ex-girlfriend’s eating disorder? Maybe I just need to lighten up! I mean, I feel so close to him.* As with food poisoning, your only recourse is to wait it out. Drink lots of water and stay away from whatever made you sick. Don’t think about him naked or touching you. Don’t masturbate to thoughts of him or stalk him online trying to convince yourself that, really, he could be okay. Be very careful about what you consume while poisoned—drugs and alcohol will only make it worse.

ALEXA TSOU LIS-REAY

Pretedium: The mixture of frustration, ennui, and anxiety that washes over you when **you realize you’ve been cornered by a known long-talker.** GENEVIEVE SMITH

Loktif

The anxious, dreamlike feeling of being trapped pointlessly in an eternal argument that can never be resolved. Prevalent during family holidays and long car journeys. JOANNA KAVENNA

Worklessness: The reliably terrible feeling of not having done the kind of work that feels valuable to you. E.Z.

Death-Happy: A prickling awareness of one’s mortality, induced by newly found contentment.

As I’ve fallen in love, married, and mapped out my life with my partner, my preoccupation with the stupid ways I could die—crossing the street, eating leftover pizza, “challenging myself physically”—has changed. The central tragedy of it would no longer be the “loss of a bright future,” but the end of my newly discovered satisfaction. Now, each time I tiptoe across a wet subway tile or sense a car passing too closely, the shock of dread is almost always washed over with gratitude. JAMES D. WALSH

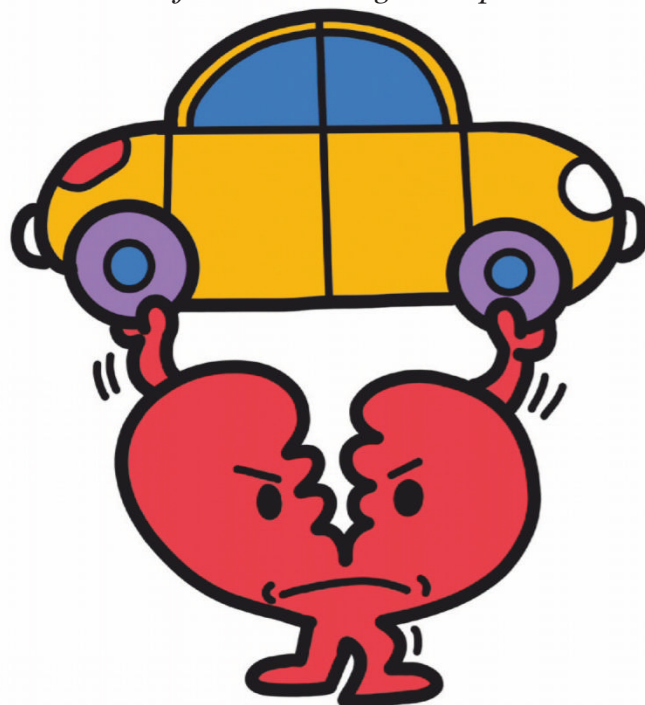
Libido Snap

The quick, vague flicker of arousal that you don’t share with your partner, because you don’t really feel like having to get naked and have sex.

Something is alight. Alive. A tiny piece of me that was dormant a second ago is awake and alert. I was just sitting here reading *Normal People*, like you—reading about Connell admiring Marianne’s slender, milky-white neck and her delicate clavicle as prominent and specific as “two hyphens”—and *phwop!* There it came, its heat buzzing around inside me ever so lightly, like a free radical seeking an electron: needy, momentarily insistent. And, also like a free radical: so small, so brief. I could act on it. I could lean over to my husband, make a show of closing the laptop he’s staring at, initiate some mutual unbuttoning, offer him a spontaneous caress. But then I’d have to put down this book, pull off this warm blanket, remove some clothing. And what was once so ethereal would become so ... earthly. Is it even there anymore? I try to locate it more specifically, knowing that as I do, it will dissolve. I turn the page. MAGGIE BULLOCK

HEARTBREAK ADRENALINE

The strange feats of strength that can be accomplished after a devastating breakup.



Moved a couch on your own somehow? Heartbreak adrenaline. Applied for and got ten different job offers? Hell, yes, you’re sad, and it’s giving you power. EDITH ZIMMERMAN

in a state of fear—by stimulating “very specific populations of neurons in very specific brain regions,” like the amygdala or hypothalamus. His research and others’ have suggested the existence of multiple “fear circuits” in the brain that are involved in producing an emotion like fear or anxiety. “The fact that there isn’t a unitary and singular locus that participates in an emotion doesn’t mean that there’s no geography to the emotion at all in the brain,” he says.

It’s fear, as well as disgust, that gives me pause when considering constructed-emotion theory. If emotions are constructed, then why do so many of us construct the same one when we see a snake? There’s a famous patient known as SM who suffered damage to her amygdala due to a rare genetic condition; as a result, she feels no fear. Snakes don’t bother her, as researchers found out the hard way. “She had to be restrained from playing with the ones that would actually be quite dangerous to her,” Antonio Damasio, a neuroscientist at the University of Southern California who has studied SM, told NPR in 2015.

“I think if you rank-ordered them, fear and disgust and aggression would probably be the three that are the clearest. The evidence that other animals have those emotions, the evidence for particular brain regions for them, is just overwhelming,” says Ralph Adolphs, a neuroscientist at Caltech and the other co-author of *The Neuroscience of Emotion*. “On the other hand,” he continues, “that’s about it.”

When it comes to the social emotions, for instance, like embarrassment or guilt, evidence of neurobiological markers gets much murkier. “You certainly don’t find them in rats,” Adolphs says. “Maybe you find them in dogs, but it’s hard to tell if we anthropomorphize.”

It does make a certain intuitive sense to think that uniquely human social emotions are socially constructed. There may not be a biological pattern that predicts Schadenfreude, but that doesn’t mean I didn’t luxuriate in it while watching the HBO documentary on Elizabeth Holmes. Or think about those viral lists of “untranslatable emotions from other languages”; it starts to seem reasonable, even obvious, that our environment must shape our emotions. But take that a step further: If, as Barrett argues, all human emotions are constructed, then that means they can also be deconstructed, or even reconstructed.

In December 2017, Barrett gave a TED

Talk in which she argued that you have more control over your emotions than you think you do. The sheepish self-help-book reader in me is exhilarated by the word *control*. The notion that you can transform your emotions through words—I want to flag down random passersby and ask them if they’ve heard the good news. I want to tell them about the research in psychology that found that changing what you call a feeling can change the way you feel it. In numerous studies, students were told to interpret their pre-exam butterflies in one of two ways: either as anxiety or excitement. And wouldn’t you know, the excited butterflies performed better on the tests.

Oh, but then the queasiness overtakes the optimism. Am I really supposed to go through life carefully thinking through every feeling I feel? *Now I’m feeling this way; no, wait—now I’m feeling this other way. Now I’m feeling like this is some self-absorbed millennial bullshit.* Also, isn’t depression supposed to be, if not caused by, at least linked to excessive self-focus? And what are we to make of mood disorders like depression in the context of this theory?

Critics of Barrett’s theory worry that to accept this idea would

mean rejecting most medical treatments. “To some extent, yes, we are constructing our own depression and anxiety,” Adolphs says. “But that can’t be the entire story, because otherwise drugs would never work!” But, well, antidepressants don’t always work. A study published in *The Lancet* in 2018 found that all 21 of the antidepressants investigated were more effective than a placebo, and for the people they help, they can be lifesaving. But other research has found that about 60 percent of users’ symptoms will improve within about two months. Barrett has speculated that depression could be the result of chronic imbalances in the body. In other words, it’s not necessarily just a brain problem.

When I first came across Barrett’s theory, I thought about an interview I’d read once with a tetrachromat—a woman who claims to be able to see 100 million colors. For her, the simple act of eating a blueberry is a whole thing. “The color of the skin is so varied,” she said. “Blues, purples, grays, gold, magentas, azures, and then when you bite them you get every type of gray, yellow, green, gold, lime, pink, violet ... I stare at them so much when I eat them: at the skin and the surprise colors inside.”

Lately, I’ve been a little sad, but I’m noticing shades in the sadness, like the colors in the blueberry. There’s loneliness, embarrassment, frustration, a little regret, some mild existential despair. Something about naming the gradations of the feeling does change my experience of it; it makes life seem a little more textured and a lot more interesting. (“I stare at them so much when I eat them.”)

It reminds me of another study, in which Russian speakers were better than English speakers in a test to quickly differentiate between light and dark blue. The Russian language has separate words for dark blue (*siniy*) and light blue (*goluboy*), which suggests that, to a Russian speaker, these colors are as distinct as red and pink. It’s not that English speakers can’t distinguish between light and dark blues, the study authors wrote, “but rather that Russian speakers cannot avoid distinguishing them.”

Maybe now that I’ve pinpointed the difference between loneliness and a vaguer form of sadness, I can’t avoid distinguishing them, either. Psychology studies have found that people who are better at putting their emotions into words are less likely to engage in destructive behaviors like binge drinking or

self-harm. “Rather than proceeding, without thinking, straight to the compulsive behavior,” writes psychiatrist Mark Epstein in his 2018 book, *Advice Not Given*, “naming the feeling allows for a pause.” During that pause, you tell yourself a story about the emotion, of how it came about and how it might go away, based on the times you’ve felt it before. Babies expect blumps to squeak; I expect loneliness to suck. But at least I know what I’m up against.

The thing that’s been hard for me to accept is that, if emotions are not biologically programmed, there is no objective truth to our emotional states. A racing heart and scattered mind could be proof that you are falling in L-O-V-E or that you’re panicked. Both are true; neither is true.

The same goes for hangxiety. For a while, I was kind of mad that I had learned about the feeling. But then, in the middle of a hangxiety episode, I stopped mentally listing the reasons everyone hated me and instead considered the idea that the physiological symptoms were real but the meaning I had attached to them was maybe not. Emotions are 100 percent real and 100 percent made up. I guess we’d better start making up some good ones. ■

If all human emotions are constructed, then that means they can also be deconstructed, or even reconstructed.

TOO MUCH BIRTHDAY

Joy so overwhelming it's actually not fun anymore.



In *Too Much Birthday*, published in 1986 in the Berenstain Bears series, Sister Bear gets a little too excited for her 6th-birthday party, arranges too many games, overindulges in cake, and writes an excessive guest list.

By the time the party's in full swing, she totally flips out and starts inexplicably sobbing. She's having too much birthday. It's the sensation of feeling so much joy at once that you almost feel lonely. You can't really enjoy the happiness surrounding you. It's the reason why one Irish good-byes from parties right at their peak, and why playing with a new puppy for too long can somehow be agitating. It's the sensation at the heart of that monologue from *American Beauty* about the plastic bag. "Sometimes there's so much ... beauty in the world,"

Wes Bentley's creepy character, Ricky Fitts, mumbles. "I feel like I can't take it, and my heart is just going to cave in." ANNIE ARMSTRONG

Creditphoria: The sickening regret, mingled with pleasure, denial, delusion, and mania, of walking into a store you don't belong in and buying something you cannot afford. STELLA BUGBEE

Nocturnal Admissions

The swirl of self-recrimination that arises in a state of middle-of-the-night semi-consciousness.

I'm awake in the middle of the night, but one program associated with consciousness hasn't booted up, a psychic anti-virus protection without which I'm vulnerable to pernicious—even sadistic—doubts. These cerebral insurgents, normally kept at bay with caffeine and a healthy sense of proportion, have breached the cranial walls and are burning bonfires in the boulevards. They strut around like European movie villains—90 percent menacing, 10 percent balletic and preposterous. But they know just what to say to hurt me. Stuff like, "You know your novel? It sucks." Or: "You're probably going to die young." What they say carries a strange weight, the force of irrefutable prophecy. "Nobody who knows you really likes you. If they do, it's only because you've briefly fooled them. You're washed up. Maybe you had talent once, but you frittered it away." Of course, these agents of destruction are in fact part of you, so what at first seems an admission in the sense of letting in may really be an admission in the sense of acknowledging the truth. And that's the scariest part: the suggestion that the waking life is the lie, sheltering you from the truth of what you admit only at night.

GREG JACKSON

Laugh-holed: When you're laughing so much with someone that it feels like some part of you dips briefly into another dimension. Afterward, it makes the concept of an afterlife or other life seem conceivable, because what was that? And how can I make it happen again? E.Z.

The first time I experienced buralysis, I was, of course, at the Department of Motor Vehicles. I was trying to register my car in the new name I had acquired upon marriage in the new state to which I had moved to be with my new husband. As proof of my new name, I had: a marriage certificate. What the agency would accept as proof of my new name: a Social Security card. What was on my Social Security card: my old name. The solution was simple: go to the Social Security office and get a new card in my new name. What I did instead: went back to my (new) apartment and lay down on the floor. Bureaucracies are as clumsily constructed as the First Little Piggy's house but as sturdy as his more patient

Buralysis

Stultifying despair in the face of bureaucracy.

brother's. The richest among us can pay someone else to endure its indignities; the rest of us pay in time. Which is why indulging buralysis feels at first like a kind of victory. Bureaucracies want your time; what better way, then, to tell them "Fuck you" than to deliberately waste it? Alas, once you've wasted your time, the bureaucracy comes back around for your money. Eventually, I got up off the floor and mailed the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, \$180 so I could take my maiden name back and enjoy the privilege of paying yet more money to register a car under it. And the bureaucratic system, unruffled by my huffing and puffing, accepted my money and resignation both as its due.

MIRANDA POPKEY

Chagrininternet

The state of minor humiliation endemic to participating in social life online.

Much as grief, dejection, and sorrow all belong to sadness, the feelings that attend getting ratioed, dropping the wrong link into your work Slack, or accidentally emailing the person you meant to talk shit about all belong to chagrininternet. At the root of these humiliations is the collapse of two boundaries—between private and public and between writing and speech—that the internet has hastened. We know not to put things in writing, but the UX of most social-media platforms encourages us to forget. (What could seem less like writing, or more like speech, than the impulse tweet or the self-deleting video?) Yet all it takes is one screenshot-and-share, one moment of lapsed judgment and weak privacy settings, for a message intended for five to reach an audience of 5 million. Chagrininternet intensifies ordinary chagrin by introducing the possibility of permanence. Phase two of chagrininternet, following quickly on that hot, vertiginous feeling of having committed an error you can't undo, is often a kind of posting mania—an impulse to bury the concerning item with more rash utterances, effluvia, and potentially regrettable content. Push the cringeworthy item deeper down the well, and perhaps it will disappear. This is a labor-intensive solution, but the alternative—a reputation-management service—is for real sinners and millionaires, not for ordinary fools like you. Fevered, chagrininternet-related production is the price of peace of mind. It may not be rational, but then emotions never are. DAYNA TORTORICI

Hupokringesis

The queasy feeling of having harshly judged and/or shamed someone online, although you are aware—somewhere in the deepest recesses of your consciousness—that you yourself are guilty of something very similar or worse.

Verb: *hupokringe, hupokringing, hupokringed*

Derivatives: adjective, informal, *hupokringeworthy*

Slang: U.S., 21st c., noun-phrase *the hupo-kays*: The second I pressed SEND I got a bad case of the *hupo-kays*.

Origin: From Greek *hupokrisis* (“acting of a theatrical part; to play a part; to pretend”); from *hupo* (“beneath; up from under”) + *krinein* (“to decide; to pass judgment”); *kringe*, from the Middle English *crenge, crenche*, related to Old English *cringan, crincan* (“to bend, yield, fall in battle”), related to the German *krank* (“sick; to experience an inward shiver of self-disgust or shame”).

ZADIE SMITH

System Reboot: The feeling of “coming to” after spending an indeterminate amount of time brainlessly using your internet-enabled device. It is a sudden awareness that you have reentered material reality after a period of having been blacked out or somehow attentionally removed from the earthly plane. The sensation combines unease, guilt, and mystification, not unlike waking up from a nap you weren't supposed to take. Unbidden naps, however, are easier to recover from: We're constantly reminded in mundane ways that we lack control over our bodies, but to concede that we also lack control over our minds is a creepier prospect. MOLLY YOUNG

TEXTUAL DREA

The nausea of knowing those three blinking dots are going to say something you don't want to hear. S.B.



Planked

The cessation and ecstatic aftermath of sustained psychological projection.

Onset is marked by the abrupt realization that you are, in fact, riddled with the fault you've been calling someone out for. This mental symptom (self-insight, humility) causes a slightly painful shortness of breath, like being startled, and speechlessness followed by a feeling of heat, typically described as a “fiery poker,” which, after blossoming at the crown of one's head, slips down and lodges in the lower abdomen where it reportedly ripens into something sickish and also hella melty. (The hotness, often mistaken for guilt or shame, is actually distinct when it occurs as an intermediary stage of feeling planked.) *It's me—*, you suddenly think. *I'm the one who's been doing that.* (Variations include: *I'm doing that* or *I'm actually doing crap that is so much worse*. Or, simply—and much more common—*I'm not perfect either*.) A few moments later, however, you feel liberated, unsheathed, breezy, and celery-fresh. This snowballing sense of rectitude is braided with unexpected euphoria: an experience of the knowledge, however delicate, that you are shot through with every other living and nonliving thing. In a sentence: “That epiphany was harsh, dude, but worth it—I'm now super-planked.” Traceable back to a story in which a famous spiritual leader chastises a villager. “You hypocrite,” he allegedly says. “Maybe lecture your neighbor about the speck in his eye after you have taken the enormous plank out of your own.” HARRY DODGE

Creatiphobia

The anxiety that you cannot possibly make another thing.

Thoughts move into a maw, a gullet of certainty that I don't know enough about what I'm supposed to write about next. Wanting to give up. Here. Now. Make it stop. Pangs move through the eyes, then shoot into tear ducts, producing adrenalized dry-lightning strikes of doubt. No tears, wanting to cry. Why can't I cry? This weather system gathers into gloomy clouds of funk. Darkening. Distracted by this—even when I'm with others. Soon I can't be with others. Into the tunnel again.

Wanting to quit; afraid to quit; wishing I were someone who could just live without doing this, without needing to see out loud, get the attention, be loved by strangers. Crumbling internal emotions turn into shale chipping away, collapsing now over the interior vents of pity. *I'm closed off again from the world*, I think. Procrastinating; palpitations; bitterness; false thoughts; the failure flocking, ominous.

JERRY SALTZ

Creatifiphoria

The heady certainty that what you're making is brilliant.

Other inklings. A deeper divination of some future place? A wilder shore? Rising-up emotions, attempts to read, take notes, Google an idea. Push further into the work. Stare out the window at the traffic. Drifting. Soon, something I didn't see coming produces small thought-warblings and nano-releases. A composing of chaos, something that turns into something else. First in the mind, partly writing it down on paper; rolling it around, feeling its shape and sound; looking for language, length, pace. Is it too much? Not enough? Is it beautiful?

I know it's close now, very close. Pulse rising with fear. Soon, a wriggling feeling. Maybe deluded grandeur, a quailing acuteness of confidence. Just enough to open another Word document. A solar barge moves inside me. I submerge into a first line; anything, words in a row; keep typing. A spiraling gyre arrives. Something's here! *I've charted this course*, I think. I may know where I'm bound a bit. How? That's too big a question. Make a first sentence declarative, give it a resounding whiff of where I want to go. Own something. Be vulnerable, strong but not obnoxious, open. Don't stop. Snapping at any interruption, going as far from the shore of foulness as this first assailing of fears can possibly take me until I no longer feel the ground beneath my feet, knowing I have to swim now, make this happen. Temperature changing. Different motions of inner waters, ponderings, depths felt or suggested, bottom falling away in wonderful ways. Don't think about it. I am carnivorous to finish.

J.S.



INSTAGRIEF

The destabilized sensation you get on vacation, or visiting somewhere, or maybe just in daily life, when you have before you a beautiful scene or something shareable, an adorable family moment, say, and you become caught between two impulses: the desire to be engaged inside the moment in a Zen way, to just experience it, and, at the same time, the desire to find your phone, get the camera on, and take a postable photo.

Inside this moment is the sorrow of knowing, with a flash of intuition, that by the time you get the phone up and the camera on, the moment will be gone. This is the paradox that infuses Instagrief with existential dread and lends it a horrific—undignified—pathos. At the same time, Instagrief acts as a reminder of time itself, the instability and fragility of particular moments (outside social media) that once, years ago, were simply good moments worthy of recording but usually missed, left behind in the sepia backlog of memories.

DAVID MEANS

Instambivalence

The sensation that you captured the moment or the scene but in doing so annulled the true human value of experiencing the moment itself, while at the same time feeling the full glory of knowing the image is immediately out there being seen by the world of Instagram. D.M.

Instagratication

The delight of accidentally catching an even better, funnier, more adorable or beautiful moment than anticipated. D.M.

Lenniness

The overwhelming desire to pick up a small, cute thing and hug it tight, regardless of the consequences. Brought on by puppies, babies, Pikachu, the red pandas at the Prospect Park Zoo, and certain appealing raccoons.

It's named, of course, for Lennie from *Of Mice and Men*, who always loved too hard.

IZZY GRINSPAN

Gleemort

Happiness felt during an otherwise sad event, like seeing an out-of-town loved one at a funeral.

KELLY CONABOY

Social Remorse

The vacant, probing humiliation that follows a social encounter, during which you comb through every interaction in search of missteps: all the things you shouldn't have said and all the ways you probably looked foolish. Most often it descends the morning after socializing but can, in rare instances, occur while still mid-conversation, causing temporary verbal paralysis and a slight sensation of disembodiment followed by a general feeling of panic. G.S.

Trick-Mirror Panic: The feeling of being confronted by misinformation about yourself. S.B.

Groundhog Day-ity: The sinking feeling upon realizing that the lesson you learned last week, and the week before that, and last year, and that other time eight years ago, is the one you also "learned" again just now. Will you ever learn this lesson? Is it not a lesson? Is your inability to learn this one crucial life lesson—or your inability to make it stick—somehow the only part of you that is fixed? This inability to remember that your current mood won't last forever—is it, in fact, the thing that *will* last forever? Will it be the one golden kernel at the bottom of the ash urn? E.Z.

Feminamity

The warm glow you get when another woman hypes you up.

The first time I experienced what *Mean Girls* coined as "girl-on-girl crime" was in sixth grade in a dingy bathroom at a middle-school dance, when Emily S., a girl I thought was my friend, accused me of sticking my boobs out in front of a posse of her new friends. That day, she left the bathroom victorious, and I stared at myself in the mirror, wondering if I had indeed been sticking my boobs out or if I was just trying to stand up straight.

This echo of girl-on-girl crime followed me through middle school, high school, even college. I found myself distrusting other women, always believing them to have ulterior motives meant to cut me down. It wasn't until I had my first job—at a tech start-up in Austin—that this began to change. On my first day, a group of my female co-workers invited me out to lunch. I found out that they had monthly lunches together because they were the only women in a company of 60. I stayed at that company for five years. These women became my friends, but, more important, lifeboats in an industry domi-

nated by men. Around those women, all I felt was a warm glow.

This glow comes to me regularly now. My manager, a woman, defends me in front of our male co-workers. A stranger on the street compliments my outfit. These moments of feminamity are not superficial. They are radical moments of understanding and empowerment. Veiled in compliments is the same message over and over again: Keep going.

The most common form of feminamity happens in bathrooms at bars and clubs. You're waiting for the toilet, washing your hands or fixing your hair. Another woman, a little tipsy, maybe topsy-turvy drunk, accosts you with her sweet, eyes-half-shut warbling. She tells you you're both doing great. She tells you you look beautiful. She tells you she loves you. I don't know how many times I've been told "You're beautiful" in the bathroom or how many times I've told another woman she's beautiful in the bathroom. All I know is that when it happens, that warm glow gets something close to burning. JENNY TINGHUI ZHANG

UGLEAUTY

The magical feeling of, after many, many, many years, coming to terms with something traditionally unattractive about yourself and knowing that it's possible, maybe, to turn it into an asset. E.Z.



Abysmal Kinship

The humbling recognition of similarity between yourself and others whom you might prefer to disdain.

I credit my husband for identifying this sensation. My husband credits his brother; his brother thought maybe he got the phrase from Conrad; it seems to have actually come from Heidegger. (He writes in his "Letter on Humanism" of "our scarcely conceivable, abysmal bodily kinship with the beast.") Abysmal kinship is what you feel when the dumbest person you follow on Twitter posts about how much they're loving a book that you love too.

Your pretensions are denied. "One of us," abysmal kinship says. For example, this is how my husband felt attending a concert of a Grateful Dead cover band in Brooklyn last year. (Jam-band fandom abounds in abysmal kinship.) He looked out on a crowd he described as "clean boys in Online Ceramics" and he knew—even if he wasn't wearing an \$80 tie-dyed T-shirt—that he was among his kind. MOLLY FISCHER

Ozing: *The shot of self-confidence that comes from a peek behind the curtain at a respected individual faking it, underperforming, or otherwise acting recognizably fallible and human. J.D.W.*

Butwhatifits: The uneasy sort of "Chrissy Teigen face" grimace of wondering if maybe despite all the work you've done, you might actually kind of have it all wrong in the end.

Or that the whole thing you've built your life around is stacked on a faulty premise.

The pea at the bottom of the quilts is in fact a lentil. Or just the queasy feeling that there will never be a "right." There will always be a worm wriggling in the corner. But what if it's ... E.Z.

Cine-void: The guilt that follows browsing Netflix and seeing an “important” film you know you should watch—and if you did watch, you would probably love and talk about for weeks—and yet choosing ‘John Wick: Chapter 2,’ a movie you convince yourself you have never seen before. J.D.W.

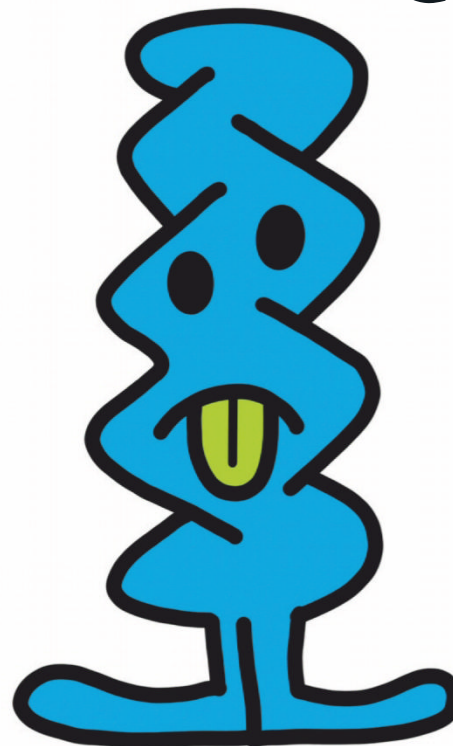
Hypeomania: The buzzy feeling of strange pride when you dislike or don’t understand something everyone else loves. MAX READ

Desire Atrophy: Sudden and inexplicable loss of interest in the thing you thought you most wanted. Accompanied by numbness and a callous disregard for other people’s feelings in the moment. Also, a wonderful sense of calm. S.B.

RAMO: (“Relief at missing out”) The release of tension that comes with losing an objectively worthwhile opportunity that the least foresighted part of yourself did not feel like pursuing (thus gaining the right to guiltlessly stick with what’s comfortable or convenient instead). In a sentence: “When the job offer was rescinded, his family was heartbroken for him—but in truth, he’d been dreading the move to D.C. and felt nothing but RAMO.” ERIC LEVITZ

Anger Trip: The feeling of self-righteous elation that layers on top of your fight-anger when you know you’re right, which causes you to express it despite your best judgment. BORIS KACHKA

PATHEODEFICIENCY



The wrung-out feeling of being so emotionally spent you have actually run out of sympathy for anyone else. G.S.

Force Majeure

A vague sense of humiliation that accompanies an instinctual flight response to a perceived danger.

It’s 10 o’clock on a Friday night, and I’m heading home after an evening teaching. I’m walking toward the subway when suddenly someone is jostling my left side. He’s prodding at me, almost affectionately, through my winter coat. His voice is soft at first, in my ear, insistent. “Who are you working for?” he demands. Then, “Why are you looking at me?” I squirm away, but he stays close, almost hugging me. “I’m not working for anyone,” I say. “And I wasn’t looking at you.” His tone becomes more menacing. I break away and run, heading for the subway entrance. As I turn the corner, he catches up and grabs me. “Who are you working for?” he murmurs again. I pull out of his grip and jog down the stairs but then think better of it—he is right behind me. I turn and push past him toward the street, when he catches me again. Then suddenly, two policemen are running toward us, barking at him to stop. They grab him and yank his hands behind his back. One cop asks if I’m okay. “Yes,” I say, before spinning away, heart racing, and rushing downstairs to the train.

Thank goodness he didn’t have a knife, I think afterward. But a gnawing self-doubt hangs over me. Shouldn’t I have seen him coming? Was running away the best choice? Should I have at least stayed to speak to the police? I want to pretend the whole thing hasn’t happened, but the feeling it evokes sticks around. I think of the film *Force Majeure*, in which a man runs away from his family to save himself from an avalanche and thereby is diminished by his fear. The phrase means “superior, or irresistible, force ... a natural or unavoidable catastrophe that interrupts the expected course of events.” In legal terms, it exempts participants from culpability, but it does not do that for me. I feel relieved but sullied, wondering about my instinct for self-preservation.

MARK EPSTEIN

Freundeschaden

The joy of connection with someone who shares your pain.

You ram through a turnstile and race down the subway stairs just in time to hear the dinging of the train’s closing doors. As you hit the platform, your heart sinks. A moment later, someone else barrels down the stairs and registers the same disappointment. Now your heart lifts a smidge. It’s not Schadenfreude (damage plus joy). It’s Freundeschaden (friend plus damage). There’s nothing mean-spirited about Freundeschaden. It’s a bond based on a shared sadness, a shared shame, or a shared anger. This bittersweet feeling contains traces of relief and community. While you would never wish a particular struggle or challenge on anyone, it’s nice to know you’re not suffering alone. Freundeschaden is not a new emotion. Italian historian Dominici de Gravina observed its existence in the 14th century. “*Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*,” he wrote.

“It is a comfort to the unfortunate to have had companions in woe.” Airplane travel is rife with Freundeschaden. I used to be angry at people with screaming kids on planes until I had kids. Now I regard those parents with deep Freundeschaden. Or if there’s in-flight turbulence, you catch the eye of a kindly passenger and feel a frisson of Freundeschaden. Yes, *we will die together*, you think. And when the plane lands safely, you and your fellow passengers will often burst into spontaneous applause to celebrate the lifting of Freundeschaden. The bond is broken as you all disperse.

NELL SCOVELL

Rembarrassment

An overwhelming feeling of humiliation at the memory of an awkward or shameful experience from long ago, often acute and unrelated to current circumstances.

You're in eighth grade. You're gangly, shy, and slow to transition out of the hand-me-downs from the boy down the street. You recently entered a Supercuts with high hopes they might bestow upon you a fun, flippy bob; you left with what is unmistakably a mullet. You are teased without mercy for these and other things that haven't even occurred to you as weird. You spend most days trying to disappear.

Your English teacher's latest idea is to have students present their favorite songs and make note of poetic devices in the lyrics. By this point, you've already begun failing the school-mandated hearing tests. Still, this assignment feels like a reprieve—you come from a musical household and have read all the liner notes in your father's large collection of CDs. You know just the song you will pick: the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil."

When the day comes, you stand

before the class and wax on about the subjective nature of history and the brilliance of telling a story in the first person from the villain's perspective. As you talk, you can feel your classmates' snickers. When you're finished, you see one of the popular girls lean across her desk to whisper something to her friend. They both burst into laughter.

What someone has neglected to tell you is the rest of the girls have chosen their songs exclusively from Britney Spears's new album, *Oops!... I Did It Again*. You sit through a dozen presentations of how Britney uses end rhyme, and no one in the class talks to you much after that.

Twenty years later, you lie in bed, your mind blissfully empty, when suddenly you are awash with embarrassment—the feeling of their eyes on you, and the mystery of the joke contained in that whisper that made them all laugh, both churn your stomach afresh. SARA NOVIC

Angstalgia

Feelings of acute nostalgia for a time to which you would dread to return.

Often, the times we remember most penetratingly are those when we were in anguish. I disliked my high school and was unhappy there, but when I went to visit it recently, I felt a longing to be within the penumbra of those antique feelings of misery. I don't miss being the kid who was bullied, yet there is a pull attached to being 14 again.

I can think of no bigger trauma than coming out of the closet. But that cusp moment, when I dared to break the silence I'd held for years, that intense discomfort, and that feeling that my life was splitting into a before and an after—how I yearn for those first dawning notes of clarity.

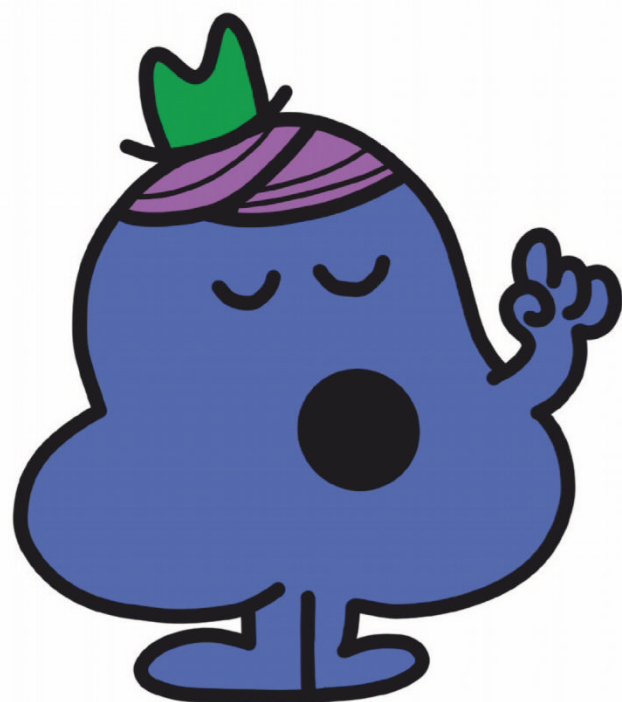
The general miasma of happy days is rich, but thinking about times of sorrow is what's really stirring. Some angstalgia is focused on the moment when the pain stopped, the revelation that everything was, in a way, all right. But the primary focus of angstalgia is desolation. Nietzsche said, "In pain there is as much wisdom as in pleasure." But I'd do him one better and suggest that in pain there is more wisdom than in pleasure.

My sense of angstalgia is so rich that I sometimes long for new difficulties. This is proleptic angstalgia, the wish to experience horrible things precisely because they will in retrospect feel like impediments to the inexorable progress of time. I seldom get on a plane without thinking how amazing it would be if oxygen masks actually did drop from the overhead compartments. I seldom check my email without imagining the news of some catastrophic loss. I seldom leave dinner with a friend without remembering that friend might die before we could meet again.

I'm not the only one who has this feeling; indeed, I encounter it frequently. I met a hospice worker who was nostalgic for the moment she lost her favorite patient. A friend described her yen for the agony of giving birth, though she cursed every contraction as it came. And I have watched great men hanker for the difficult decisions they made in an office they have now surrendered.

Freud said every fear is also a wish, and I often wish for what I most fear. Angstalgia is dangerous for people like me, who periodically take the express elevator to the bargain basement of mental health. I try to temper the yearning I have for a broken past. I don't want to sentimentalize horror; it's not fun while you're going through it. But angstalgia attaches to every prior anguish because we experience and so remember times of suffering with greater intensity, animation, and desire.

ANDREW SOLOMON



MORAL MASTURBATION

The solitary pleasure of being right.

You were wronged. The memory of the initial incident has worn smooth. Now it's no longer a source of pain or anxiety—it's something to pull out recreationally. The familiar contours feel good. You know exactly which parts of the story make you experience your moral superiority most acutely, which vistas from the high ground are the best. Fondly, you rehearse the same plot points, imagine slight variations and hypotheticals, cherish the knowledge that the ending will always be the same—it's you, now, irrefutably right. Afterward, you feel a little gross. M.F.

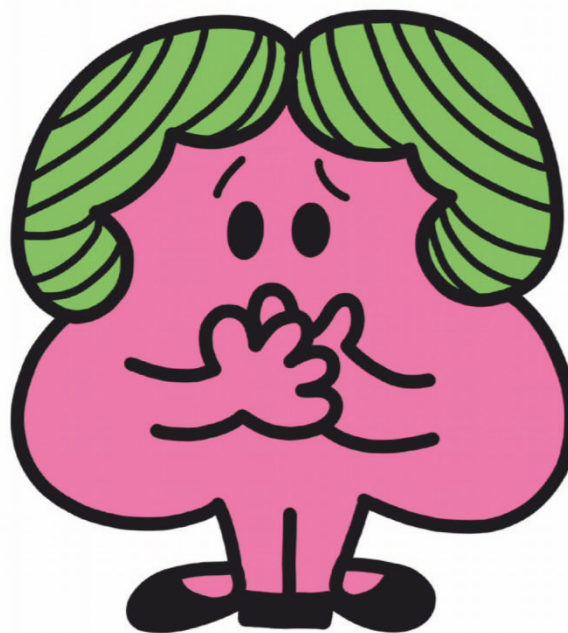
Pearning

Yearning for the pond.

Each July, a group of friends and I spend seven days together on a remote, miles-long pond in Maine. To get there, you drive about two hours on the highway, then another hour on country roads, then 20 minutes down a dirt logging road, and then you catch a boat to this place—an old Maine fishing camp, though none of us fish. There's no internet and no cell service there. We stay in little cabins and spend our days on one of a series of tiny, uninhabited islands reached by canoe, sitting by the water in folding chairs, surrounded by tall trees. We've done it for more than 20 years now. Anyway, about this time of year exactly, all of us—each one of us a working professional, overburdened, maxed out, and thoroughly sick of winter—starts doing something we call pearning. It's basically “yearning for the pond.” It's trying to summon the feeling of taking a midday nap on your beach towel on the pine needles, just listening to the breeze in the trees and the loons calling on the pond. It's longing to be unreachable and fully present in exactly one place in one specific moment. It's about the deepest and most specific form of longing I know.

SARA CORBETT

SELF-MOMSCIOUS



A feeling specific to new mothers, triggered by insecurity over their parenting skills and irrational fears of being judged by other people for their parenting. Produces a need to speak louder to your child and apologize in advance, fake smiles, light sweats, and a desire to flee, followed by indignant stress eating. S.B.

Filsamis (French, pronounced ‘fees-a-meess’): **The warmth that comes over you when you watch your offspring playing nicely with the offspring of a friend of yours.** These second-generation friendships are often forced by parents, so when one genuinely blossoms, it creates a special kind of pride and joy. N.S.

Red-Line Repentant

The regret you feel when you've impulsively drawn a red line and now know the rest of your night is ruined.

It's bedtime for your 3-to-8-year-old, and you're tired and hungry. You've read her two books, rubbed her back, gotten her a Band-Aid for her pretend injury, refilled her water, taken her to the bathroom, and applied lotion to her “itchy neck.” Now she's asked you to tuck her in. You refuse. Which is odd, because you always tuck her in. Tucking her in is no big deal, especially after all that other stuff you've done in order to avoid a blowup. Also, tucking her in is probably your favorite part of the day. But in a moment of parental frustration and random assertiveness, you've drawn an arbitrary red line, and she looks at you, and you look at her, and you must decide whether to give in or to stand your ground, and you can't let her think she can change your mind by whining after you've used your serious voice, so you don't budge. No, you say. I won't tuck you in. She screams and cries and screams, and you brace yourself, knowing you might never sleep or eat dinner again.

BRIAN PLATZER

Sleeplonging

A crushing desire for the baby you were desperate to put to bed.

The baby has been awake since 4 a.m. You are tired beyond tired. Consciousness is a state you don't fully enter but never completely leave. Finally, after it feels like she has been awake for a thousand days, her eyes fall shut, the nipple drops from her mouth, and she goes soft. You lower her into the crib. The shower, the tea, the quiet are waiting, but here is the surprise: As the warm water runs over you, you miss her. In your robe, you stand above her curled form, her cheeks sleep-pink, and you lean down to smell her, the dew of baby sweat, her hands softer than when she is awake. Though you have waited all morning for her to sleep, now you want her back. You reach in and scoop her up and take her to the nursing chair, where your arms will go numb, your neck will tighten, you'll watch a dream flutter across her eyelids, and regret nothing. RAMONA AUSUBEL

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Win or lose,
Pete Buttigieg's
senior adviser
Lis Smith has
turned an
unknown mayor
into a serious
contender.

BY CLARE MALONE

Lis Left Star

A COUPLE OF MONTHS BACK, I was in New Hampshire, bumping along on a tricked-out campaign bus stocked with SkinnyPop and White Claw hard seltzer (snacks befitting the first millennial presidential candidate), when Lis Smith, Pete Buttigieg's senior communications adviser, told me something that caught me off guard. She loves the *New York Post*, she said, and gets it delivered to her home. The *Post* is the same paper that once called Smith a "bimbo" and wrote a story, among many others, claiming that her then boyfriend, former New York governor Eliot Spitzer, had spent part of a Jamaican vacation sucking her toes in a hot tub.

That she could still love a paper that had so publicly abused her stayed on my mind while I shivered in an uninsulated barn, a brewery, a theater, and a middle school watching Buttigieg stump along with the other reporters Smith had invited for an on-the-record ride through the state. She mostly stayed on the warm bus. At night, during an off-the-record ride back to the hotel, with the candidate safely cocooned away in some reporterless SUV, Smith drove the conversation, peppering the members of the press with questions about their thoughts on the day's events, the bus tour, and the state of the race. While campaign manager Mike Schmuhl and press secretary Chris Meagher sipped their drinks wearily, Smith answered questions and needled the assembled crowd of reporters. She was the uncontested center of attention.



nding

Smith and Buttigieg on the campaign bus on November 9, 2019, headed to an event at Lebanon Middle School in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

At 37, Smith is already a campaign-worn strategist and Washington, D.C., folk hero, credited with launching the 38-year-old mayor to, if not the top tier of the presidential race, its second tier—not a bad showing for someone who was a relative unknown this time last year. Even before she dated the “Luv Gov” and was marked by the particular kind of celebrity that only New York tabloids can bestow—niche, intoxicating, and troubling all at once—Smith seemed destined for notoriety. “Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under’t,” was her high-school-yearbook quote, a line spoken by Lady Macbeth. “She came, like, fully formed in the stilettos to college,” one Dartmouth classmate said.

With jet-black hair and big hazel eyes lacquered with mascara and smudged with liner, Smith looks like a slightly devious Snow White. She is partial to all black and leather jackets and wearing sunglasses indoors, which, she told me, has a particular utility: “I have very expressive eyes, and sometimes, when we’re doing those on-the-record bus tours, wearing sunglasses is sort of a way to sit back and look around the room without people knowing.”

On the New Hampshire bus trip, modeled after John McCain’s *Straight Talk Express* (Smith met McCain at a fund-raiser when she was in high school), she hovered near Buttigieg at all times, glowering over her phone listening to questions as she scrolled. Smith’s theory of media domination means putting the candidate in the direct line of the press and hoping the access—rare in national politics—generates goodwill. The countless hours spent answering questions has proved a clever way to burnish Buttigieg’s smart-young-man image. Even if he doesn’t exude the chummy presence that McCain had on a press bus, Buttigieg still gets credit for wanting to. That feeling that attracts voters to Buttigieg is something Smith crafted, bugging reporters to let him talk about his military record and precocious ambitions.

The need for a campaign to have a good story line is something Smith has understood for a while. Politics has become pop culture, and the formerly dull mechanisms of government and the people who understand them are either basking in odd new categories of fame (see the Obama-alum staff of Crooked Media) or grasping to maintain relevance (see the New York *Times* editorial board dabbling in the tropes of elimination-show reality TV by announcing candidate endorsements via a heavily edited episode of the paper’s FX docuseries). In response, campaigns have “moved from messaging to content creation,” and Smith is especially good at it, David Turner, the 34-year-old communications director of the Democratic Governors Association, told me.

Turner met Smith when he was running press for a dark-horse governor’s race and she was working out of the DGA headquarters. He considers her a mentor, the purveyor of sage advice like what to do when you’re stuck on a dud of a campaign. “She told me with a long-shot challenge you can experiment,” he said. It’s advice she herself has taken to heart. James Singer worked with Smith on Martin O’Malley’s presidential bid in 2016 and told me that Smith was already toying with the total-saturation approach to campaign communications she’s used this election cycle, but Buttigieg provides an even better vehicle to test her theo-

ries about political media. “With Pete, she had this talented ball of clay,” says Singer. Buttigieg knows how to sing for his media supper, speaking French and Norwegian and talking about James Joyce and bringing Democrats and Republicans together with sensible policy solutions. And Smith knows how much reporters, America’s underpaid political gatekeepers, love to talk about how they’ve read (parts of) *Ulysses*. She knew what they wanted: not just a good quote but a good character. She gave them Mayor Pete. Though Buttigieg is now struggling through a harsher phase of media critique, catching flack for the whiteness of his supporters and drawing questions about just what he means when he talks about “heartland” values, Smith has already made her mark—everyone knows his name, even if they’re tweeting sourly about him. Whether the campaign can move beyond its current problems remains to be seen, but Buttigieg has as decent a shot as he could have hoped for, and that is Smith’s doing. “On campaigns, you’ve got a lot of hand-wringers, a lot of lemon suckers,” former governor of Virginia and former Smith boss Terry McAuliffe told me. “Not with Lis.”

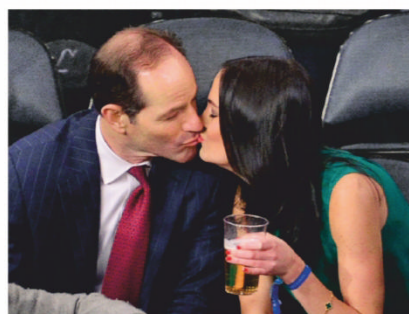
“If Lis Smith was a

I T’S DIFFICULT TO DIVINE precisely how a person acquires the sort of self-assurance that allows them to speak candidly with would-be Masters of the Universe for a living, but a childhood in Westchester is not a bad start. Since Smith and her twin brother are a decade younger than her older siblings, Smith’s parents “didn’t do kiddie stuff” with them.

Smith was worldly from a young age. At 9 years old, in the midst of the 1992 Democratic primary, Smith was able to spot Jerry Brown and point him out to her mother as they stood outside the Parker Meridien hotel. “I’d go into the first day of fourth grade, and they’d ask me, ‘What did you do over the summer?’ And I’d name like ten countries I’d been to,” she said. She told this story while sitting in the lobby bar of Santa Monica’s bougie haven Shutters on the Beach (a sentimental favorite from childhood).

Her parents, both lawyers, had their own connections to Washington politics. Smith’s father, Thomas, is a cousin of Senator Sam Ervin, who famously ran the Watergate hearings; her mother Adrienne’s family was entrenched in the New Hampshire “first in the nation” primary process, meeting the candidates, like Reagan and Ted Kennedy, on their whistle-stop tours. “My father was born toward the end of the Depression, an only child, in a mill town in North Carolina,” Smith told me, sounding an awful lot like a politician telling her origin story to a pancake-breakfast crowd. “Obviously, the fact that Sam was family was big.”

Smith talks about her time at Dartmouth almost as another campaign. She got heavily involved in Democratic politics there, and by the time the 2004 presidential election rolled around in her junior and senior years, she was volunteering nearly full time for John Edwards.



With Spitzer at a March 2014 Knicks game; on the cover of the New York Post in December 2013; and alongside de Blasio at the White House that same month.





On Buttigieg's campaign bus during a four-day tour of Iowa in September 2019.

West Wing character, you would roll your eyes.”

In one formative anecdote she relayed with particular glee, his campaign sent her to do some low-grade ratfucking at a town hall for retired Army general Wesley Clark. The mission was to use a pointed question about his record to make him look like a corrupt insider. She wore a pair of low-slung Juicy Couture jeans. (“There were never fewer than, like, two inches between my sweater and my jeans,” Smith said of her aesthetic at the time.) “I probably didn’t look like the person that would ask Wes Clark about his long record of lobbying.” “Tell them you did a good job,” a Clark aide told her on the way out.

When she graduated, Smith went to work on Claire McCaskill’s 2006 Senate campaign in Missouri. Richard Martin, McCaskill’s campaign manager, said it was obvious that Smith was talented but frustrated by her lowly status on the press team. “I just thought of her as a shooting star, and either she was going to burn out or she was going to make it big,” he said. After McCaskill’s win, she joined a 2007 Kentucky governor’s race as traveling press secretary (lost), a 2008 Illinois House race as communications director (lost), two governors’ races in 2009 as press secretary—McAuliffe’s in Virginia (won) and Jon Corzine’s in New Jersey (lost)—then Ted Strickland’s 2010 Ohio governor’s race as communications director (lost), and the Democratic Governors Association for a stint, followed by a big break as director of rapid response on the Obama 2012 campaign (won), then a job as press secretary on Spitzer’s comptroller campaign in 2013 (lost) and gigs as a spokeswoman for Bill de Blasio for mayor in 2013 (won), deputy campaign manager for O’Malley for president in 2016 (lost), then spokeswoman for Andrew Cuomo for governor in 2018 (won), and finally Buttigieg in 2020 (?).

Along the way, she built relationships in the media—not just in the egotistical TV-studio cesspools of New York but in swing states, too. “I remember at the time almost being afraid of her,” said Joe Vardon, who was a reporter at the Toledo *Blade* during the 2010 Ohio governor’s race. Smith had a way about her, he said. “She would stare at you when you’re face-to-face, and she does want to kill you in that moment—it’s believable.”

But Smith’s real power is that reporters actually like her. It helps that she’s fun—“She’ll have a beer or a vodka or several,”

Vardon said—but it’s also that she knows how to spot and place a story that will pop. Vardon, who now writes about the NBA at the sports site the Athletic, put together that Buttigieg looks a little like Brad Stevens, the coach of the Boston Celtics. He sent Smith a message on Twitter. “I had just started to pitch the idea” about arranging a conversation between the two youthful, Indiana-born overachievers, he said, “and before I could even finish, she just said, ‘Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,’ and she put me on the phone with Pete for a half-hour, which, as you know, is a long time to be on the phone with a candidate.”

Singer worked on opposition research for O’Malley. (He later headed up Kamala Harris’s 2020 research team.) Part of his job was to pitch Smith, O’Malley’s deputy campaign manager, on stories that she could then pitch to the press. He recalled one story they placed in 2015 that compiled all the times Hillary Clinton had spoken positively about the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal that became a bugaboo for Bernie Sanders supporters as a sign of her supposed anti-working-class bias. “That was big for me because we got it pitched and Tapper published it,” Singer said, referring to CNN star reporter Jake Tapper. It wasn’t enough to save O’Malley’s campaign, but it was a good shot at the front-runner.

Smith made waves on the Obama 2012 campaign largely because of her Twitter attacks on Mitt Romney, which were prolific. Rachel Cohen, a Senate communications director who worked with Smith on that campaign, said she remembered Smith taking her computer with her into the ladies’ room so she wouldn’t miss anything that happened online. Much of the content of Smith’s attacks seems quaint in the age of Trump: She harped on Romney’s unreleased tax returns and, in the final days of the election, hammered on his misleading spin that an auto manufacturer would be leaving swing state Ohio for China.

She also wasn’t afraid to use the right’s megaphone to plant her message. In 2016, “she always went to a bunch of right-wing people,” Singer said, like Ed Henry at Fox or writers at *The Weekly Standard*. According to Singer, Smith’s philosophy was, “Sometimes it’s not about getting in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, but if you can get something in an ecosystem—it can be the left or the right—it will churn up and turn into something larger.”

During the Buttigieg campaign, she's drawn fire for her record of having worked for conservative Democrats as well as progressive ones; she lacks a core belief system, her critics might say. Smith isn't bothered. "I'm a true believer in terms of the Democratic Party, but I believe in a big-tent Democratic Party," she said. "My personal views are, you know, I'm from New York. I'm a pretty liberal Democrat."

Smith has also proved particularly suited—or particularly well adapted—to the masculine culture of professional politics. She knows how to gossip and isn't stingy with colorful on-the-record comments. "Lis gets on the phone with me, and on the record is like just dropping F-bombs," one reporter told me about a story he was working on. "The F-bomb was this gratuitous quote, but it also just made the story." She is a good hang who listens to the notoriously boorish Barstool Sports podcasts and watches ESPN to unwind while she exercises. "She can talk basketball, she can talk sports, she can do all of that," Turner said. She bullied the O'Malley team into a fantasy-football league and would joke every weekend "that she wanted to rip our throats out," Singer said. At his going-away party, she made an unusual request: "She wanted a lock of my hair, which is so fucking weird and hilarious, and of course we were absolutely hammered," he said. "I think there's a picture somewhere of her in a very dingy Baltimore bar clipping my hair for good luck." One former campaign co-worker said that being a woman in the heavily male space of politics can be an advantage. "There's a certain element of particularly male reporters who find her good-looking—this is not minimizing her, I want to be clear. This is minimizing a nerdy press corps," he said.

Smith herself seemed a bit on edge when I asked about her persona. "I'm not just a caricature, you know," she said, over drinks at a West Village bar. Her time in the tabloid spotlight began in 2013, when she was working for de Blasio's first mayoral campaign: During the transition from campaign to City Hall, the *New York Post* broke that Smith was dating Spitzer, who had stepped down as governor in 2008 after being caught up in the sting of a high-priced prostitution ring. (Smith is so enmeshed in the brutally parochial school of New York politics that she is a glittering thread connecting three of the state's most powerful politicians, all of whom hate one another—de Blasio, Cuomo, and Spitzer.) "Ho! Ho! Ho!" proclaimed one Christmastime *Post* cover featuring Smith and Spitzer. "Xmas Leg Nog" was the *Daily News*' take on the holiday photos of Smith in a dress. "Eliot and DeBabe," read another *Post* cover with a picture of the couple emerging from Smith's apartment.

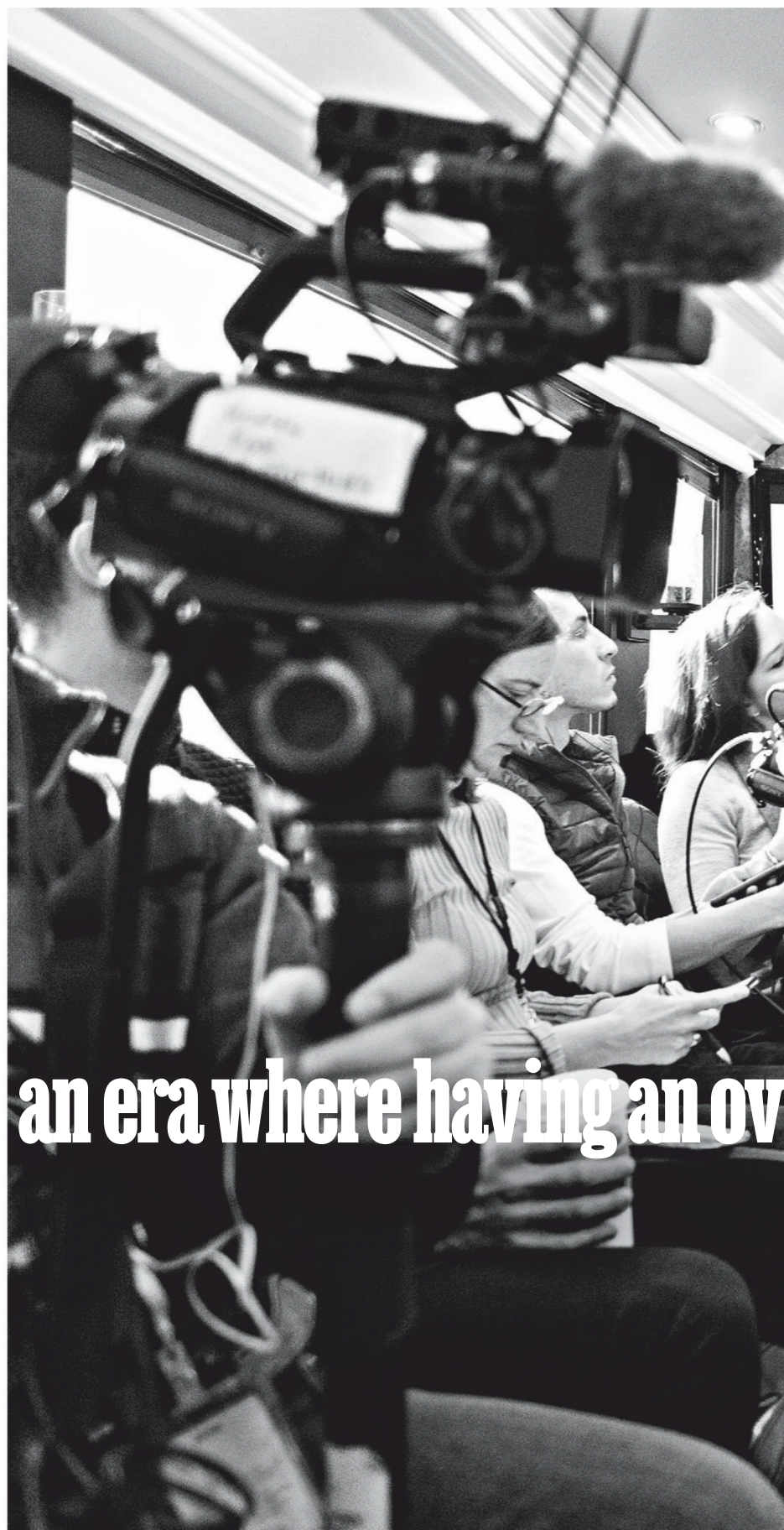
Smith's tabloid drama has become part of her arsenal of professional assets. She's the rare staffer who can accurately claim to understand what her famous boss is going through while suffering in the media glare. As for Spitzer, Smith was largely mute about him on the record, as were others I interviewed. "It was a relationship that became very public, but I would like to keep that private and any aspects generally of my life private going forward," she said.

She considers herself an introvert. "Part of being an introvert is you sit back and watch people and see what makes them tick," she said. One political reporter said she's good at "making what must be 100 reporters feel like they're intimately involved with this campaign and this candidate and can reach out for anything."

She responds to texts and emails, seemingly at all hours. When Politico's "Playbook" newsletter wrote up her birthday party in October, many reporters from CNN and the *Times* made the "spotted" list. Ben Smith, the editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed and soon-to-be *Times* media columnist, pointed me to the interview he'd done with Buttigieg, part of a series with all the candidates, as something "emblematic" of the way she operates. Though he texts Buttigieg, she replies first, giving him shit for texting from a "couch in Brooklyn" and asking why she doesn't see any BuzzFeed reporters at her press gaggle in Iowa ("Not a buzzfeeded [sic] reporter in sight. Sad!"). "I've done a bunch of these with candidates, and it's the only one where the flack gets ahold of the phone and takes it away from the candidate," he said.

"There's not a really positive way to say this," he said of Smith's

"This just isn't an era where having an ov



outsized presence, “but I mean this positively: This just isn’t an era where having an overdeveloped sense of shame really helps you much.” She has this in common with President Trump, for whom Smith admitted her selective admiration. “I would be lying if I said I hadn’t studied some of his approach with the media and what worked, what didn’t work.”

IN JANUARY 2017, Buttigieg decided to run for chair of the Democratic National Committee. He lost the race but gained a key asset: Smith. President Obama’s top communications adviser, David Axelrod, told me that, as he recalled it, Buttigieg had specifically asked him about Smith. “This is a campaign that is very, very tight knit, with Mike, me, and Pete,” Smith said, referring to Buttigieg and his

campaign manager and childhood friend, Schmuhl. “It was just the three of us, really, at the beginning.” Neither Buttigieg nor Schmuhl had a political résumé beyond Indiana politics before a couple of years ago, and they’re both on the placid end of the spectrum, at least by political-world standards. “They’re very different,” Axelrod said of Smith and Buttigieg. “She’s about as subtle as a bulldozer.”

“The fact that he had a veteran campaign warrior who understood the media and understood how to deal with media was not only practically important for him as a candidate but also signified that he was serious,” Axelrod told me. But Smith needed Buttigieg just as much; it’s not as if Joe Biden or Elizabeth Warren were likely to welcome her into their campaign inner circles. Smith considers Axelrod a mentor. She worked (Continued on page 92)



Addressing the press on the campaign bus.

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THE LOOK BOOK GOES TO ASTOR PLACE HAIRSTYLISTS

DILE...

BEST BETS

The Dustpan a Monk Recommends to Clean Up Any Mess

➤ SHOUKEI MATSUMOTO, a Japanese Buddhist monk (and the author of *A Monk's Guide to a Clean House and Mind*), cleans for two hours most days at his temple in Tokyo. "When it's raining," he says, "I polish stuff for holy rituals; when it's sunny, I go clean the courtyard, sweep up leaves." While many Buddhist monks in Tokyo and farther afield in Japan do actually use modern appliances (vacuums and even Roombas) to tidy, Matsumoto says he prefers tools made of natural materials, things that are "symbolic of a simple life," like this **dustpan and brush** (\$46 at [etsy.com](#)) made by Los Angeles-based tools-and-accessories line RTIhome from bamboo and *washi*, a Japanese paper used in screen-making. For his other favorite cleaning products—useful to monks and non-monks alike—turn the page.

Photograph by Joe Lingeman

Ten Other Tools He Tidies With



Meet the Monk:

Shoukei Matsumoto, a 41-year-old Hokkaido native, studied Western philosophy at the University of Tokyo and began living as a monk of the Jodo Shinshu school in 2003.

TOOLS FOR CLEANING OUTDOORS:

“Even when I began living as a monk, I didn’t fully understand the importance of cleaning. Whatever the school, monks work hard to keep their temple very tidy. In Japanese Buddhism, we don’t separate the outdoor world from the inner world. If you keep your environment clean and tidy, you keep your inner world—your mind—clean and tidy. **1 Outdoor broom for the steps:** You should

never use the broom you use

outside for cleaning inside; we consider that dirty, just like going inside a house with shoes on. For outside, the brush should be bigger, and the material should be hard enough to sweep leaves or cigarette butts off of stone. This one’s brush (**O-Cedar Broom**, \$30 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) is broom corn. A softer broom might not be strong enough to push that stuff.” **2 Outdoor broom for the garden:**

“This broom’s brush (**SolaGB Corn Broom**, \$16 at [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com)) creates a nice, meditative sound as you sweep it. In Japan, it’s very normal to sweep not only the land your house is on but also land around it, like public sidewalks or nearby parks or gardens.” **TOOLS FOR CLEANING INDOORS:**

3 Indoor broom for the floors: “The brush on a broom for sweeping inside should be softer and smaller. Japanese houses sometimes have tatami floors, and hard bristles may hurt the surface of that. Plus, inside you’re mostly sweeping away dust, and a softer brush, like this one (**Havencroft Farm Kitchen Broom**, \$60 at [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com)), is fine for that.” **4 Indoor broom for the dining table:** “Use this (**Huibot Metal Dustpan and Brush Set**, \$10 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) to clean up any little mess on the table. Don’t put the dustpan on the table; hold it under the edge to catch

whatever you’re sweeping off of it.” **5 Dish-cloth:** “This is a popular kitchen towel (**Mrs. Miwako’s Towels**, \$19 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) we use in Japan to clean tables before meals or to wipe up spills or small bits of dust. I use a fresh one every day because, if you leave it out overnight, some bacteria may grow.” **6 Scrub brush:** “The *tawashi* is another very popular Japanese cleaning tool (**Kamenoko Tawashi Scrub**, \$12 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)). Use it to scrub dirty pans or bowls—not tables, because the bristles are very hard and could hurt wood or glass. The brush is very versatile. I keep separate *tawashi* for inside and outside. Outside, you can use it to polish metal, like hubcaps on cars. Inside, some people use it to clean the toilet.” **7 Feather duster:** “A feather duster is the softest type of tool for cleaning. This (**Royal Ostrich Feather Duster**, \$10 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) is for the most delicate places, like *butsudan*, a small temple or shrine within many Japanese houses.” **CLOTHES FOR CLEANING:**

8 Samue: “Changing into specific clothes for cleaning can help the practice become intentional. *Samue* (**Kyoetsu**, \$60 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) is workwear for monks; it’s good for cleaning as well as daily life. Wearing it can be a powerful way to change your mind—and your mood. I have three different kinds of the same *samue*, like Steve Jobs with his black turtlenecks.” **9 Tabi socks:** “Monks put so much energy into cleaning every day that even white *tabi* socks (**Elibelle Socks**, \$10 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) won’t get dirty. Inside, we are often barefoot, but wearing *tabi* is good for cleaning holier spaces, like around the Buddha statue.” **10 Setta:** “These *setta* (**Kyoetsu Setta**, \$35 at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)) are considered shoes, so they’re for outside; I wear them to clean the garden. *Setta* mold to your feet. Some Buddhist monks in Japan practice on a mountain, and part of that practice is running and walking around the mountain for an average of 25 miles a day—in shoes like this.”

OUTDOOR



(1)



(2)

INDOOR



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)



(7)

CLOTHES



(8)



(9)



(10)

THE LOOK BOOK GOES TO

Astor Place Hairstylists

*Newly shorn clients
on a Thursday afternoon
at the 73-year-old
downtown barbershop.*

INTERVIEWS BY
KATY SCHNEIDER AND
JANE DRINKARD

JACK O'GRADY
*Student,
North Carolina*

**Is this where
you normally get
your hair cut?**

No. So I'm on a surprise trip from Cary, where we live, with my dad. We're going snowboarding after, and I needed a haircut so I could see. My dad took me here because his mom took him here like 35 years ago, so he wanted me to come too.

How'd you decide on the cut? I was deciding between this and a fade. But my dad thought this would be the best thing for me, so that's how I decided.

I've had a lot of haircuts. One where it was really long on the left and short on the right. Once

I got it—what's it called?—buzzed and then no one knew who I was at school. They asked the teacher who the new person was.

I was like, "Oh, it's Jack!"

THE LOOK BOOK: ASTOR PLACE HAIRSTYLISTS



SATO WADA
Legal Translator, Upper West Side

← **How long have you been coming here?**
Since '91. I love the place. So New York. I get in the chair, say "What's up?" to Alex, my barber, maybe talk about how crazy Trump is for a second, then a minute later he's done. Also they have a karaoke machine, so.



JAMEL ROBINSON
Artist, Harlem



JENSEN KEETS
Fashion Designer and Songwriter, Hell's Kitchen



ERIC TEITEL
Doctor, Upper West Side



EDMUND TRANG
Student, Washington Heights



ROMAN SOROBAY
Self-employed, East Village



LINDA MOORE
Retired, Gowanus



JELLAL CHAOUQI
Student, Paris

▸ **What did you ask for today?**
Today is just a trim. You can't see, but under the right side of my hair, it's shaved. I did that three years ago, here, around when I was coming out. It felt like the best way to express it without saying it. Afterward, I strutted around Astor trying to get used to it, seeing how I felt. It was a trip.



NOVA LUCERO
Community Organizer, Norwood

✓ **Always the same barber?**

Yes, Deon. He cut my hair through law school. And he knew when I was applying for jobs because I kept coming in in a suit. When I got an offer, I told him and he dapped me up.



MAHARI SIMMONDS
Law Student, South Bronx



DESPO MAGONI
Artist, Brooklyn Heights



ALAN WARREN
Executive, Westchester



ERIK FULLER
Photographer, South Bronx



DILLON STOREY
Model, Bushwick

✓ **What are you doing after this?** Well, I'm a model, but I'm also a nightclub promoter at the Little Sister Lounge in the East Village. Tonight, I'm bringing three young models to the club, all 21, of course. So yeah, first impressions matter.



JOSEPH MODIRZADEH
Dancer, Harlem



PRANAV LOWE
Student, Soho



CHARLES DANIELS
Retired, Tremont



PAISLEY LANOUILLE
Artist, South Bronx

THE URBANIST:



Tucson

*Sonoran Desert chiles, full-moon-brewed beer,
and grocery-store-heiress antiques.*

TUCSON'S NEVER REALLY HAD an official nickname. There's "Old Pueblo," meant to evoke the city's ancient roots—it was settled by 17th-century Spanish missionaries on prehistoric Hohokam land. Some locals reject it as sounding too sleepy or because it was coined as a marketing ploy to siphon tourists from other southwestern cities (like Santa Fe, the long-reigning popular girl of the Southwest). Recently, such tactics have become unnecessary. In 2015, Tucson was the first "city of gastronomy" to be named in the U.S. by the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. The body chose Tucson for its agricultural history (it has been continuously cultivated for 4,000 years—the longest in North America) and wide variety of cultural influences (take the popular bacon-wrapped Sonoran hot dog). All of a sudden, restaurants and bars with newfangled menus started popping up throughout the city, luring food-obsessed visitors and averaging an opening a week by 2018. The formerly sparse downtown became home to breweries, shops, and stylish hotels, but, as is often the case, rents shot up and longtime beloved businesses closed. A bright spot: Tucson elected its first Latina mayor, Regina Romero, in November, cementing its status as a "blue dot in a sea of red." As for visiting, winter and spring are the best times to go (most people fly into Phoenix and drive the hour and a half to Tucson), when temperatures rarely drop below 60 or go above 80 degrees.

ELIZABETH THOMPSON



*The back room of
coffee shop Exo Roast
Co. turns into a
mezcal bar at night.*

01

Four Ideal Evenings

*Shamanic walks
and dive bars.*

VISIT AN UNRUINED DIVE

"**Danny's Baboquivari Lounge** (2910 E. Fort Lowell Rd.) is a classic watering hole, named after my favorite mountain in southern Arizona, and has charismatic bartenders and a great patio. In the era of shows like *Bar Rescue*, it breaks my heart watching classic bars being converted into half-hearted man caves. Danny's still has their timeless cowboy wallpaper, hand-drawn cactus sign out front, and weird outsider-art robot structure out back."

—BRYAN EICHHORST, *drink programmer at Owls Club*

ATTEND A STAR PARTY

"**Kitt Peak National Observatory** and **Mt. Lemmon SkyCenter** observatory both have nighttime programs that are great—from explorations of the moon to overnight telescope observing sessions where you get a full tour of the cosmos that lasts right up until sunrise. There's also the **Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association**, which hosts regular star parties open to the public. Also, if you just want to be able to see the Milky Way with your naked eye, go west, over Gates Pass, toward **Saguaro National Park**."

—BUELL JANNUZI, *head of the University of Arizona's astronomy department and Steward Observatory*

TAKE A WITCH-APPROVED WALK

"There is a full-moon labyrinth walk hosted by the **Web of Life-Intuitive Shamanic Animists** group. The labyrinth is created monthly in the desert and outlined in lights, with an altar in the center. Or if you want a drink, **Crooked Tooth Brewing Co.** (228 E. 6th St.) makes Full Moon beer that is brewed under the full moon each month and crafted in ritual with a variety of crystals and herbs that support the intended vibration of the beer."

—MELISA DORAN COLE, *owner of witchy-goods store and community space the Ninth House*

CATCH A WORD-OF-MOUTH WAILA BAND

"Waila bands play out in the Tohono O'odham Nation, at the **San Xavier Dance Ramada**, but it's mostly word-of-mouth. Waila has that norteño-style polka sound with jazz elements but differs in that it's almost exclusively instrumental. You can also hear waila on Rez Radio here every Friday night."

—DUNCAN HUDSON, *music director of KXCI Community Radio*

Photograph by Julius Schlosburg





02

From Kimchee Egg Sandwiches to Aji Ceviche

A day's worth of food options, according to James Beard Award semifinalist **Don Guerra** of Barrio Bread.

BREAKFAST

"Start at **Exo Roast Co.** (403 N. Sixth Ave.) and keep it simple with a beautiful coffee, which they roast in house—the owners are really into preserving the true flavor of the coffee.

They have these inventive breakfast sandwiches, like Kimchee Egg. It's made with Bajo Tierra Kitchen kimchee, a little local, Sonoran-style kimchee company that uses local chiltepin and cilantro. They have a lovely back room, which turns into El Crisol mezcal bar at night."

LUNCH

"For lunch, I'd go nearby to **BOCA Tacos y Tequila** (533 N. Fourth Ave.) and people-watch the crowd walking by. I love the Rajas tacos with roasted Anaheim chiles in a cheese sauce. The tacos, which arrive on a cutting board, come with three or four salsas to try that they walk you through. It's not just a red salsa, a green salsa, and that's it. Chef Maria Mazon changes them daily and is really creative—you might get a basil salsa or a fruit salsa."

DINNER

"Go down to **Charro del Rey** (178 E. Broadway Blvd.). It's a seafood restaurant from the Flores family, who own the Mexican restaurant El Charro—a Tucson institution—and are icons in the community. Their aji ceviche is so fresh and delicious. It's plenty for one person or great to share, and the price point is \$12; when you consider the obvious thoughtfulness and preparation that goes into it, that ceviche would easily be \$20 if you were eating up at Ventana Canyon resort."

DESSERT

"Go to **Monsoon Chocolate** (234 E. 22nd St.). The owner, Adam Krantz, opened in an old tortilla factory. They have a frozen hot chocolate that, when it's 105 here in July and your brain is melting, will make you feel like a million dollars."

03

WANT TO RILE UP A TUCSONAN?

Bring up ... Phoenix

To an outsider, Tucson and Phoenix may seem indistinguishable. Confusing Tucson with its rival 90 minutes to the north, however, will result in a terse correction from a local. Fueling the grudge are the bitter sports rivalries between the state's two biggest colleges—the University of Arizona in Tucson and Arizona State University. Then there's the tendency for Tucsonans to look down their noses at Phoenix's moneyed sprawl. Though no stranger to resorts, Tucson thinks of itself as more accepting of its natural desert habitat—bland dirt, rocks, and all.

The Immigration Crisis

The city is home to anti-deportation human-rights groups like No More Deaths, which has long provided water and food to immigrants crossing the harsh Sonoran Desert on foot. No More Deaths volunteer Scott Warren became a national story when he was arrested by Border Patrol agents in 2018 and charged with three felonies for providing temporary shelter to two young men crossing from Central America.

Downtown

The recent revitalization of Tucson's downtown has pushed out artists and small businesses. The 2019 razing of a longtime music venue (to make room for high-rise apartments) fanned the flames of the decade-long "Keep Tucson Shitty" anti-gentrification movement, a play on similar pleas from Portland and Austin to keep their towns "weird."

04

Where a Local Would Stay If She Weren't a Local

Acupuncturist **Kelly LeGendre** on the best places to spend the night (and possibly spot Diane Keaton).

\$

THE DOWNTOWN CLIFTON (485 S. Stone Ave.)

"A newly renovated motor lodge with a Western, mid-century, Pendleton-blanket kind of vibe, located just south of downtown. It's also home to the Red Light Lounge, which features Sonoran-inspired cocktails, food, and little bites like delicious masa pretzels."

\$\$

THE FIG (BARRIO VIEJO)

(Location provided upon booking.) "An updated, four-bedroom historic adobe. It's in the charming historic district, Barrio Viejo, and is the place to stay if you want to experience Tucson like a local. You might run into Diane Keaton, who recently bought a house nearby."



\$\$\$

POSADA

(Location provided upon booking.) "A truly gorgeous lodge-style inn with a modern Sonoran feel. Right at the edge of Saguaro National Park, it's a 30-minute drive from downtown and perfectly located for hiking and exploring the nearby Sonora Desert Museum."

PLUS ONE FOR THE 'GRAM



\$

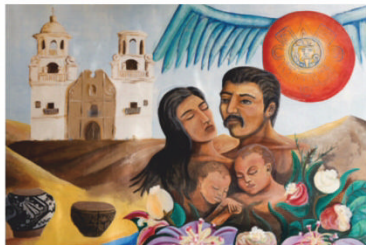
HOTEL MCCOY

(720 W. Silverlake Rd.) "It's affordable and filled with colorful pieces by local artists. You drive in under a painted rainbow archway that says 'Tucson Is Magic' and is begging to be photographed."

05

A MURALIST'S FAVORITE MURAL

Plus a gallery and museum recommended by artists.



La Pilita

420 S. Main Ave.

"What I love about this mural is how it's influenced by the Chicano style; it's not trained or academic. It is so beautiful and simple and tells the timeline of a family's Aztec roots. It was restored about ten years ago, so the colors are super-beautiful."

—RACHEAL RIOS, muralist

Etherton Gallery

135 S. Sixth Ave. B

"They put on world-class exhibitions with local and international artists. Their latest installation, 'Land Re-Form,' showcases incredible gelatin-silver-print landscape photos. I also love a series of self-portraits taken by Arizona artist Mark Klett; they're of him and his daughter, and they date back to the early '90s."

—NICK GEORGIOU, sculptor

Pima Air & Space Museum

6000 E. Valencia Rd.

"There are about 350 aircraft, and you can go right up to them—close enough to see the nose art painted on each of them. Their helicopters are very fun for little ones because you can touch them, and they also have tons of jumpsuits and artifacts on display."

—ISHI GLINSKY, artist

06

The Ball-Paylore House



A Mid-Century Architecture Tour

Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation CEO Demion Clinco shares a day's worth of the city's notable churches, storefronts, and signs.

START AT

The Welcome Diner

(902 E. Broadway Blvd.). "A wonderful example of restored Google architecture."

THEN HEAD EAST TO

The Sunshine Mile

(east along Broadway Blvd. from the Welcome Diner to Country Club Rd.). "You'll see clusters of incredibly intact storefronts by local mid-century legend Bernard Friedman: the sculptural former Valley National Bank Building (3033 E. Broadway Blvd.), which was built in 1971, then Hirsh's Shoes, built in 1954 (2934 E. Broadway

Blvd.), which is one of the few surviving examples of this type of commercial architecture in the country."

TRAVEL NORTH ALONG COUNTRY CLUB TO

Catalina American Baptist Church

(1900 N. Country Club Rd.), designed by Charles Cox. "Cox did a few churches. This one has an angled, hyperbolic-paraboloid thin-shell roof and is on the National Register of Historic Places."

DRIVE NORTHWEST TO MIRACLE MILE

"It's full of intact mid-century motels and neon signs.

There's the iconic Tucson Inn sign (127 W. Drachman St.), but another really special neon sign was designed by Georgia O'Keeffe for the Ghost Ranch Lodge (801 W. Miracle Mile), which has since been turned into senior housing.

DRIVE SOUTHEAST AND FINISH AT

The Shelter

(4155 E. Grant Rd.). "This bar was built in 1961 by Anne Rysdale, the only female architect working in Tucson during the '50s and early '60s."

ONE YOU CAN STAY IN

"We recently bought and restored the historic Ball-Paylore House, by architect Arthur T. Brown. We made it rentable on Airbnb. It's the quintessential example of desert mid-century architecture."

08

Easy Excursions

Courtesy of ceramics artist and frequent outside-the-city-limits explorer Lia Griesser.



Stroll Around

a 17th-Century Mission

45 minutes south of Tucson

"Mission San José de Tumacácori, which is situated in a mesquite bosk, was founded in 1691, and the gardens and orchards have been replanted. Across the street is Abe's Old Tumacacori Bar—a charming, real desert watering hole and tavern. Next to that is Santa Cruz Chili & Spice. Pick up a pack of chiltepins, the wild progenitor of domesticated chiles that originate from the Sonoran Desert."

Stay in a Clay-Forward B&B

About 80 minutes southeast of Tucson

"Stay at a B&B run by Bill and Athena Steen of the Canelo Project in nearby Canelo. They literally wrote the book on building with clay, and their land is covered in examples of the craft. Then drive south and get lost in the maze of backcountry roads with epic prairie views."



Eat at a Restaurant Built Into a Cliff

About 75 minutes south of Tucson

"The border wall runs straight through the city of Nogales, and you get a real sense of how intrusive it is for the people who live there. The area is architecturally fascinating, with most storefronts dating to the mid-20th century, when the town was booming. Eat at La Roca, built in the late 1800s in the style of a Mexican hacienda. Sit in the bright-blue main dining room built into the rock wall of a natural cliff."

07

Bring Home Some Tepary Beans

The best spots for Tucson-specific wares.



FOR HEIRESS VINTAGE: "Tom's Fine Furniture and Collectables

(5454 E. Pima St.) has a mishmash of antiques and jewelry. He once bought the estate from the heiress to the Fry's grocery-store chain. There was like 30 years' worth of Chanel in there." —SALIMA BOUFELFEL AND ROBERTO COWAN, owners of Desert Vintage

FOR EPHEMERA ON A RANCH: "The Antique and Vintage Fair at

Medella Vina Ranch (4450 S. Houghton Rd.) is the first Sunday of the month and has a great cross section of vintage clothes, books, jewelry, and odds and ends. And it's beautiful out there on the fields." —S.B. AND R.C.

FOR NATIVE AMERICAN SEEDS: "Native Seeds/SEARCH (3061 N.

Campbell Ave.) is likely the only place to buy tepary beans and mesquite cutting boards while supporting a nonprofit dedicated to conserving southwestern crop diversity." —TAWNEY WEIR, owner of Little Toro Designs



Circular Economy

Russell Piccione's eclectic brownstone in Murray Hill is full of the orphaned and particular.

BY WENDY GOODMAN



Foyer

Francis Jennings's 1960s geometric abstraction, bought at the estate sale of the artist, dominates the wall (left) opposite the Campana Brothers' Zig Zag panel, originally made for São Paulo Fashion Week, that continues up the stairwell.



Sitting Room

A Nahum Parker American settee, ca. 1830, in mohair velvet sits beneath the large reflector on the wall, which Piccione fell for when he saw it as a prop in a store window.



↑
The Study
 Another Jennings hangs behind a Maison Jansen desk from the 1960s. The Edo-period Japanese screen continues the palette of gold and saffron from the 1950s American side chairs beneath Gio Ponti's studies for a book cover. Piccione bought them from the Ponti family in Milan.

→
Dining Room
 A Steven Gontarski photograph, ca. 2005, hangs in the company of Milton Dacosta paintings and a set of George III candlestick holders, ca. 1770.



↑
The Library
 The French wax-figure centerpiece under glass, depicting a chariot (ca. 1810), sits on top of the early-18th-century gilt-gesso center table. The display is taken in by the continuous gaze of the American sculptor Horatio Greenough's bust, above.





INTERIOR DESIGNER RUSSELL PICCIONE has a scavenger's eye. Six years ago, he spied a massive concave mirror in the window of the Chloé boutique on Madison Avenue—an Olafur Eliasson-esque prop, then facing the end of its shopper-beguiling life. Now it's the unavoidable glittery thing in the sitting room of the Murray Hill brownstone he rents with his partner, Antonio Haslauer. The 14-foot ceilings of his parlor floor dwarfed even his painting from the studio of Veronese, but this would surely pack a punch when juxtaposed with the settee upholstered in sapphire-blue mohair velvet, which he'd bought at auction because it was, he thought, “such a strong example of the period and the idea of furniture as ‘fantasy architecture.’”

This five-story, 25-room house from the 1890s “has a lot of souvenirs of hard times,” Piccione says. But it was its tattered beauty—and the space it provided for his nearly 9,000 books—that drew him in with its possibilities. There was room for a Campana Brothers screen to wend its way up the stairwell; it was one of several “made for São Paulo for Fashion Week years ago, when shows were held in the Niemeyer pavilion in the park,” he says. This screen was a perfect foil to skew the brownstone's Gilded Age architecture.

Everything in the house, it seems, has an unusual provenance. Take the French wax-figure centerpiece in the library: “It was deaccessioned from the Met,” he says. “And Met people said they loved it but couldn't make anything of it, and I couldn't find out how it made its way into the collection. Minor damages and possibly uncertainty about it kept it in perpetual storage at the museum, a genuine curiosity. I was attracted by its ephemeral nature—delicate wax figures that survived two centuries. Then, a guest at a dinner party, a London art dealer, brings forth a theory that underscored my attraction to it. He was reminded of drawings of the table decorations at the banquet to celebrate the wedding of Napoleon and Marie Louise—figures in wax and some in sugar. He made a very good case for it!” This is what Piccione loves, this connection across time to “people marking a moment in their lives and fashioning their optimism and gladness into little wax companions to a festive meal. Brilliant!”

Why aren't they in the market to buy? “I mean, renting allows you to live much beyond your means,” he says, laughing. “I fear maybe a little less now, but New York is really a renter city. It always has been.” ■



Le Crocodile

You'll Want Frites With That

The Chez Ma Tante team's classic-brasserie-style Le Crocodile feels familiar, but that's the point.

BY ADAM PLATT

THERE ARE ALL SORTS of reasons why the second act following a surprise hit like Jake Leiber and Aidan O'Neal's fine little Greenpoint bistro, Chez Ma Tante, can be more difficult and fraught with peril than the first one. Even out in the neighborly, relatively low-key fine-dining precincts of Brooklyn these days, success tends to attract the usual siren song of new money, which often brings with it a whole new set of challenges. How do you manage a larger kitchen staff and a bigger (read: more bankable) room, not to mention a rabble of opinionated new investors? Do you scrap your successful old formulas for an entirely new concept? Or do you reprise beloved recipes for simmered pork shoulder, say, or Chez Ma Tante's famous brunchtime pancakes, which are popular among the old regulars but may lose a little of their special alchemy in a larger, more impersonal space?

Happily for the old regulars, Chez Ma Tante remains open in its cozy corner spot on Calyer Street, not far from the

booming Williamsburg waterfront, but if you want to watch Leiber and O'Neal wrestle with this next, more populous stage of their careers, you can do it at an expansive new brasserie called Le Crocodile, which opened recently in the oft-remodeled dining room on the ground floor of the Wythe Hotel. This venture seats 90 (as opposed to 50 back on Calyer Street), and—with the help of their new, deep-pocketed partners at the Golden Age Hospitality group (Acme, the Happiest Hour)—the tall, dining-hall-style space has been refitted with stylish new toffee-colored wood moldings along the walls, a generously sized bar up front serving six varieties of gin-and-tonics, and a classic menu that reads as if it's been transported directly from one of the more venerable dining precincts of Montreal or Paris.

"Almost everything here looks good to eat," pronounced one of the self-appointed brasserie experts at my table. And if you're a fan of organ-meat pâtés (I counted four options), heart-stopping Gallic specialties

like "oeuf mayonnaise chaud" (dappled here, for extra measure, with trout roe), and a variety of barnyard proteins (steak, chicken, duck) piled, in classic bistro fashion, with mountains of salty, golden frites, it's true. Leiber and O'Neal have taken inspiration from the usual sacred institutions in Paris (the profiteroles are a facsimile of the ones they encountered at Chez Georges) and Montreal (Au Pied de Cochon, L'Express), but their stated goal at Le Crocodile is to build in Brooklyn the kind of buzzy, accessible, casually elegant French-accented destination that has flourished across the river for years at restaurants like Balthazar and, more recently, Frenchette.

This seems like a noble enough aspiration, not to mention a wise business decision for young chefs plotting their second act, and if you happen to be a devotee of the old (and, it must be admitted, somewhat overly familiar) brasserie canon, there's plenty to like about the cooking at Le Crocodile. I'm thinking of the escargots served de-shelled in a pool of fennel-rich stew touched with Pernod and of the tender shrimp in my shrimp cocktail, which were de-shelled too and laid out, like the finest oysters, on a mound of crushed ice. My sturdy crock of onion soup arrived at the table on just the wrong side of tepidness, but the chewy, pistachio-flecked beet salad was a thing of beauty, and so was the smooth, perfectly textured omelet, which the kitchen serves as one of the "plats principaux" with a tangle of frisée decked here and there with pickled chanterelles.

Plenty of other bounty is available on the main-course list; indeed, some prepa-



Le Crocodile
80 Wythe Ave.,
at N. 11th St.,
Williamsburg
718-460-8004
lecrocodile.com

KEY: The rating scale of 0 to 100 reflects our editors' appraisals of all the tangible and intangible factors that make a restaurant or bar great—or terrible—regardless of price.

rations (the country chicken buried in those drifts of salty frites, the gargantuan, beautifully seared duck breast bathed in gouts of prune sauce) seem like almost too much of a good thing. There are also platters of soft, knuckle-size sweetbreads buttressed with puréed potatoes, lardons, and a shimmering veal gravy (delicious, if you like that sort of thing); crunchy-topped servings of aged New York strip with a boat of thickly whipped béarnaise (ditto); and a sturdy winter pot-au-feu constructed with plump boudin blanc sausages seasoned with a blend of nutmeg and cloves among other things. I didn't manage to eat my way through all of the slightly lighter offerings (salmon with horseradish cream, a promising-sounding vegetarian tagine), but if you have to choose between the pork chop and the steak au poivre, call for the latter, which is one of the best new examples in town of this great specialty.

In the depths of the wintry, post-holiday doldrums, the poshly refurbished dining room at Le Crocodile doesn't quite exude the sense of crackling occasion and bonhomie that the famous institutions on which it's modeled are known for. But there's a good roster of stiff, well-crafted (though, for \$16, not inexpensive by neighborhood standards) classic cocktails to help enliven your evening (try the Vieux Carré stirred with reserve armagnac) and a bountiful selection of desserts. These range from the usual old chestnuts (madeleines dusted with powdered sugar, a standard-issue crème brûlée, the slightly stodgy Chez Georges knockoff profiteroles) to more internationalist selections from the bistro catalogue, including slices of lemon tart, delicious maple pie, and banana-flavored sticky toffee pudding the size (and heft) of a small cannonball.

SCRATCHPAD

The polished hotel dining room lacks a little of the old-neighborhood-brasserie terroir, but a fine bar program and an expansive, diligently executed menu add up to a solid "very good" rating.

BITES

IDEAL MEAL: Fromage de tête and/or chicken-liver pâté, beet salad and/or escargots, omelet with chanterelles and/or roasted chicken, sweetbreads with lardons, steak au poivre, maple pie. **NOTE:** Fans of the beloved Chez Ma Tante brunchtime pancakes, keep your fingers crossed; Le Crocodile will begin serving weekend brunch shortly. **OPEN:** Dinner Monday to Saturday. **PRICES:** Appetizers, \$9 to \$21; entrées, \$19 to \$91.

THE DISH

"Pepperoni" Pizza

Strewing a pizza pie with pepperoni isn't an inherently radical act—unless you're Anthony Mangieri, owner of Una Pizza Napoletana. The Jersey-born, Naples-inspired dough savant has hewed to stricter-than-Neapolitan standards for nearly a quarter-century, politely declining requests to slice pies or offer optional toppings, let alone besmirch the surface of a tender, springy, naturally leavened pizza with something as ignoble as pepperoni (which, by the way, doesn't exist in Italy, where the word *peperoni* refers to bell peppers). "The initial catalyst was, honestly, my 8-year-old daughter," says Mangieri. "She was always like, 'Why don't you do a pepperoni?'" It's now one of four extra toppings (including salted anchovies and Calabrian hot peppers) that Mangieri added to his menu late last year along with three new special pies, bringing the total to one for each of the six nights he's open—a pivot away from the restaurant's former small plates and a rededication to pizza and dough as the stars of the show. In a town overrun with roni cups, an Una Pizza margherita with pepperoni is undoubtedly the most elegant version of the form.

R.R. & R.P.

On the menu at
Una Pizza
Napoletana; \$27;
175 Orchard St.,
nr. Stanton St.;
646-692-3475

"Room-temperature fermenting is where the magic is, where the art is, where the wildness comes from," says Mangieri, who makes his **dough** simply from flour, water, and sea salt.

For the **sauce**, Mangieri cuts off the tips of his San Marzano DOP tomatoes before crushing them because "they're too bitter."



Mangieri sources pepperoni from Ezzo in Columbus and Tempesta in Chicago.

Buffalo-mozzarella shipments from Jersey-based importer Lioni Latticini arrive every Thursday.

DRINKS

Five Great Cups ...

❶ L.A. Burdick

156 Prince St.

The Soho boutique chocolatier offers several choices—including single-origin varieties—but the standout is the **dark drinking chocolate**. Dense and deep yet eminently sippable, its velvety texture, clean chocolate flavor, and espresso undertones border on addictive.

❷ Brooklyn

Farmacy & Soda Fountain

513 Henry St., Carroll Gardens

The version at this **retro soda fountain** is elegant and understated—all the better to go overboard with extravagant toppings. Choose a sticky, snowball-size scoop of housemade marshmallow fluff plopped, root-beer-float style, into the cup.

❸ MarieBelle

484 Broome St.

The Aztec (**65 percent cacao**) hot chocolate at this posh chocolatier is surely the most decadent of the bunch—thick and molten. Opt for the small, which, at four ounces, satisfies without overwhelming.

❹ Obsessive

Chocolate Disorder

63 E. 4th St.

Sebastian Brecht experimented with every permutation of cocoa powder, melted chocolate, cream, and milk before landing on a desired formula for his subterranean chocolate lab. He uses some of each, yielding **a cup that is bittersweet and lush**, with or without a cap of whipped cream.

❺ Bar Pisellino

52 Grove St.

West Village restaurant icons Jody Williams and Rita Sodi's rendition is decidedly grown-up: **rich and mildly sweet** with a puddle of whipped cream bobbing on top. Its presentation—perched on an antique silver tray alongside a glass of sparkling water—also qualifies it as the most genteel.

LEAH KOENIG

... And the Return of City Bakery Founder Maury Rubin's OG Elixir

AH, FINALLY, FEBRUARY IS HERE. The news of the world may be bad and getting worse, but like we say, February has arrived. Why does this excite us? February, after all, is cold and gray and miserable. Although it's the shortest month, it seems like the longest. It slithers on. It persists. If February were March, it would come in like a banana slug and go out like a blobfish. But February is also the month of hot chocolate and, since its 1992 debut, the City Bakery Hot Chocolate Festival. And although the City Bakery is done, having closed in October owing to financial hardship, its founder Maury Rubin, a.k.a. Mr. February, is not.

In fact, Rubin has decided to usher in his favorite month by launching the Wonderbon Chocolate Co., an enterprise devoted entirely to cacao in its myriad forms, especially the molten one. He and his new partner, a German tech-industry executive and longtime City Bakery customer with a deep-seated hot-chocolate fixation, have taken a three-month lease on a Bleecker Street storefront that most recently housed Sugar and Plumm. There, in a counter-service espresso-bar setting, Rubin will summon all the creative inspiration he has deployed over close to three decades and translate it into a menu of six to eight rotating hot-chocolate flavors a day, half of them spiked with booze and served from 5 to 7 p.m., during hot-chocolate happy hour, individually or in a flight. We do not doubt him when he says that his mezcal-laced hot chocolate with a cocoa-salted rim is “a world's-first situation.”

But Rubin has more in mind than sparing New York from a festival-less February. He has spent recent weeks experimenting with dark-chocolate-olive-oil truffles, peanut-butter tartines with salted peanuts and chocolate sauce, and cold hot-chocolate pudding. Because of the new shop's kitchen limitations, he has had to forsake his signature marshmallow, and in its place he's engineered a selection of whipped creams, each designed to garnish a different hot chocolate—white-chocolate hot chocolate with Persian-lime whipped cream, for instance. He has even delved into the realm of vegan drinks, using a mixture of oat milk, coconut, and soy.

The ultimate goal of Wonderbon, says Rubin, is to create a retail line of packaged, ready-to-drink hot chocolate, a project he has dabbled with in the past. “As the world of specialty beverages has just gone berserk, and gotten so cool and so interesting and so expansive, it's still missing a great hot chocolate.” That kind of commercial product requires extensive R&D, so don't expect to find it on the supermarket shelf anytime soon. But luckily for the bulk-hot-chocolate consumer, Rubin has improvised an alternative delivery system: For the run of the pop-up, you can get your fix not only by the cup or shot but by the 32- or 64-ounce growler. **R.R. & R.P.**



The Wonderbon Chocolate Co.

257 Bleecker St.,
at Cornelia St.



*The Wonderbon
Chocolate Co.'s hot
chocolate keeping
a passerby warm on
Bleecker Street.*

In *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, Fatherhood is Part of the Adventure

Inside the universal heart of the show's epic story.

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BEST PLAY

The story continues on stage...

What would it be like to have Harry Potter as your dad? And how does Harry—"the Boy Who Lived"—grow up to be a father? These are the questions at the heart of the epic, two-Part adventure that is *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, now playing on Broadway at the Lyric Theatre.

"The show reunites you with all the characters you love," explains Jenny Jules, who plays the adult Hermione. "It takes us on an adventure back to Hogwarts and it shows us that growing up doesn't mean having

J.K. ROWLING'S

Harry Potter

AND THE
CURSED CHILD

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HARRYPOTTERONSTAGE.COM



everything figured out—for both Harry and his son.”

"Being a great wizard doesn't necessarily make you a great father," says James Snyder, who plays the adult Harry. "And Harry isn't always great with Albus. He can't always let Albus find his own way and be his own person. As a father myself I find it really moving that Harry has to overcome that, because that's true for every parent. It's a way that everyone can relate to our show whether or not they are familiar with the books or the films."

Harry Potter's journey continues on stage in a spectacle of magic and wonder that begins

where the books left off with Harry and Ginny taking their middle son Albus to Platform Nine and Three-Quarters for his first day at Hogwarts. And father and son soon learn the uncomfortable truth: sometimes, darkness comes from unexpected places.

Jules adds, "One thing that made me such a fan of J.K. Rowling's novels is that I adored the characters in her stories, and our show gets that, too. It gives you people to cheer for and cry for and care for as they're trying to save the world."



Phot by Matthew Murphy



COAL COUNTRY BEGINS FEB 18

The new docudrama from the team that brought you **THE EXONERATED**,
JESSICA BLANK & ERIK JENSEN, with new music by **STEVE EARLE**



PICTURED: KWAME KWEI-ARMAH, PHOTO BY TAMMY SHELL

ASTOR

THE VAGRANT TRILOGY BEGINS MAR 17

An epic story told in three parts by **MONA MANSOUR** and directed by **MARK WING-DAVEY**

WINTER / SPRING

THE VISITOR BEGINS MAR 24

The new musical from Tony-winning team **TOM KITT** and **BRIAN YORKEY**
with **KWAME KWEI-ARMAH**, with direction by **DANIEL SULLIVAN**

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The CULTURE PAGES

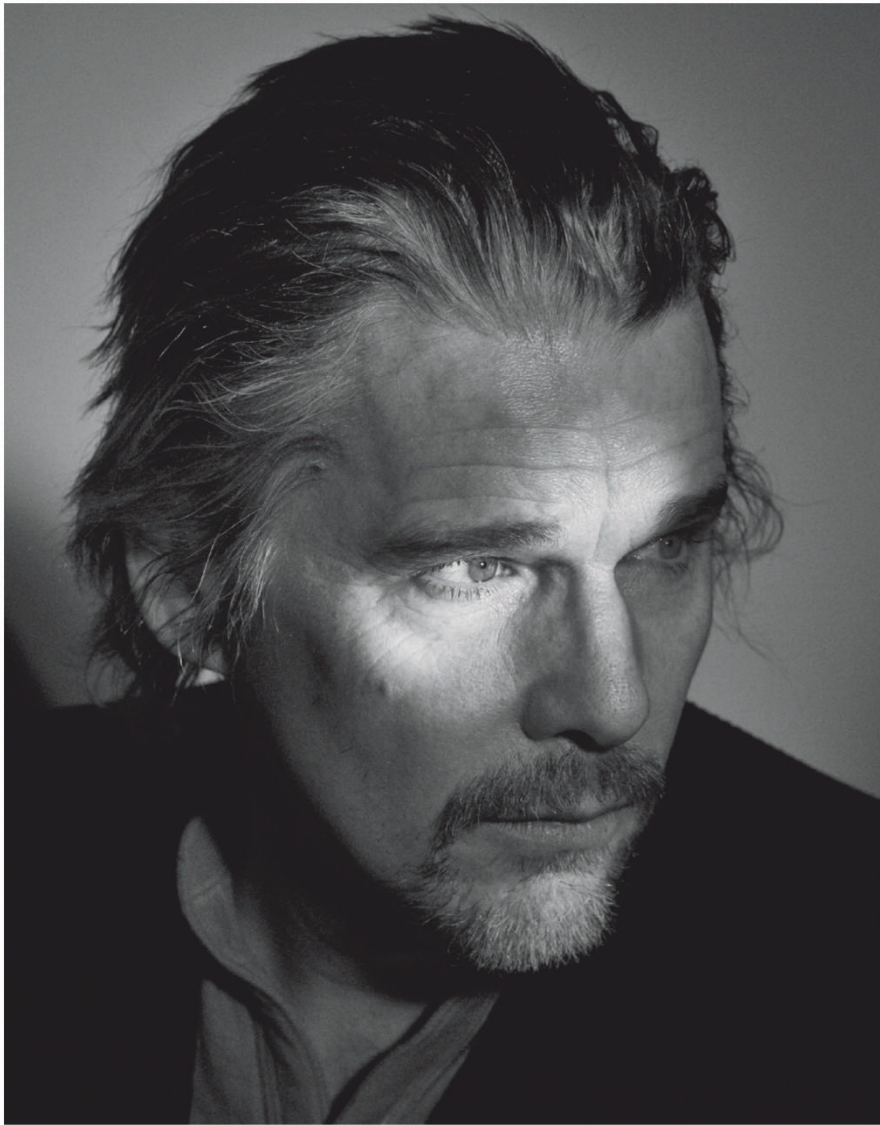
Julia
Garner,
THE
ASSISTANT

This Year at Sundance

THIS YEAR'S Sundance Film Festival had some big deals—including \$17,500,000.69 for the Andy Samberg comedy *Palm Springs*, the biggest acquisition in festival history, beating out 2016's *The Birth of a Nation* by 69 cents (nice)—but it was largely defined by how comparatively low-key and hype free it was. And for people more interested in the future of film, rather than prefab buzz, that's a good thing. This year, the excitement usually came after the movies premiered.

With Harvey Weinstein on trial in far-off Manhattan, and one of the festival's most-talked-about films, Kitty Green's *The Assistant*, showing

how so much of the industry is a machine built to protect predators, the focus, and tone, has shifted. Not coincidentally, this was also probably the most inclusive slate of films in Sundance history, with astounding work being delivered by directors like Lee Isaac Chung (*Minari*), Janicza Bravo (*Zola*), and Eliza Hittman (*Never Rarely Sometimes Always*). In fact, you could go the entire festival and not see a single movie directed by a white dude. The results were surprising, innovative, and vibrant. Here are some of our favorite people from this year's Sundance, courtesy of the Vulture photo studio.



Ethan Hawke,
TESLA



Camila Mendes,
PALM SPRINGS



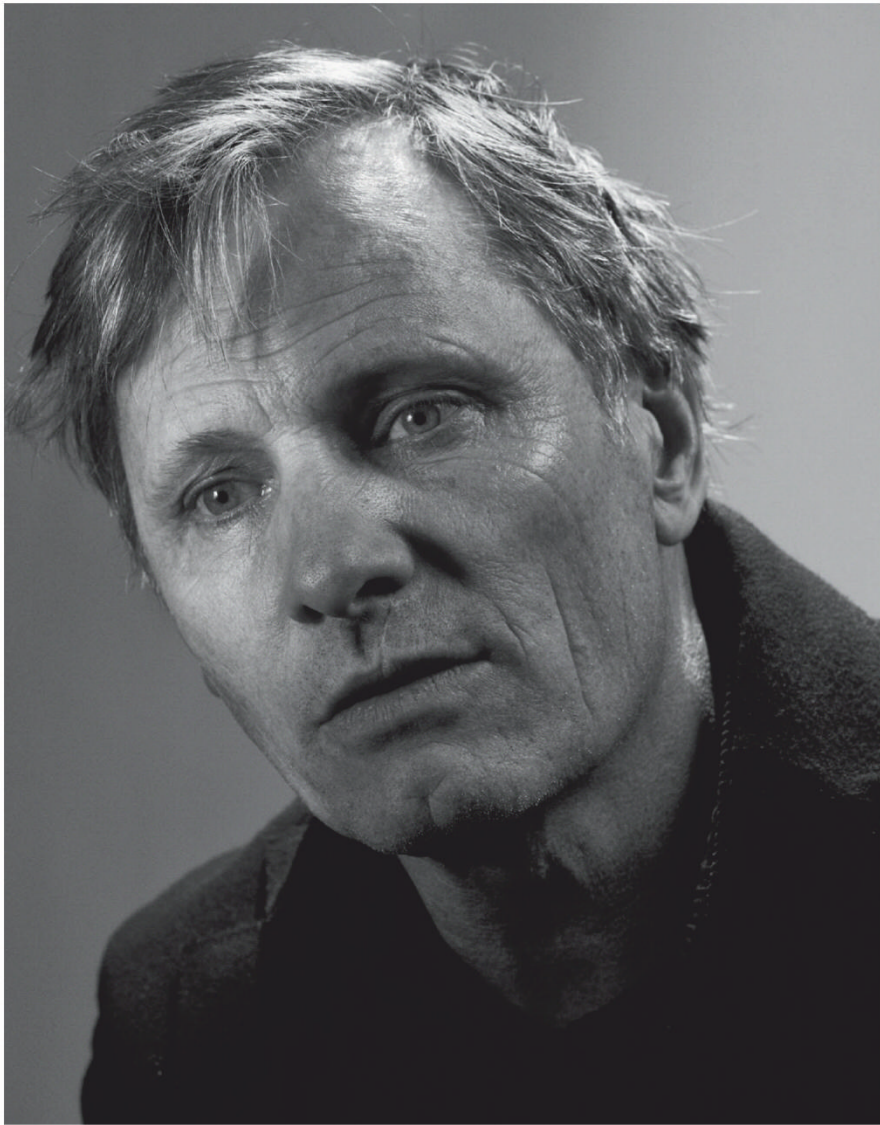
Talia Ryder,
NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES ALWAYS



A'Ziah King,
ZOLA



Alan Kim,
MINARI



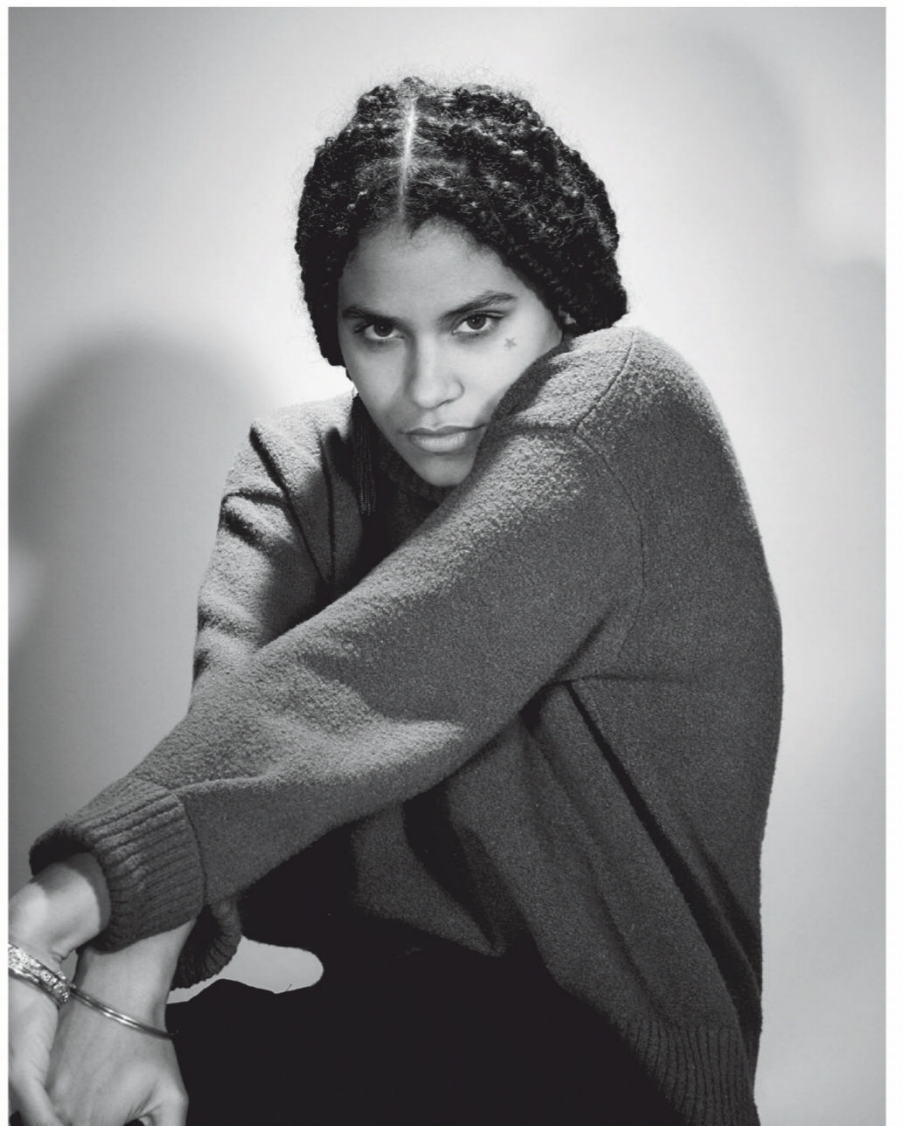
Viggo Mortensen,
FALLING



Rachel Brosnahan,
IRONBARK



Kali Uchis,
BLAST BEAT



Zazie Beetz,
NINE DAYS



**Julia
Louis-Dreyfus,**
DOWNHILL

Yes, This Is Me

Robert Andy Coombs shows
us a gorgeous orchidology of sexual desire.

By Jerry Saltz

ROBERT ANDY COOMBS is showing at the Palm Springs
Art Museum through March 29.



THE PHOTOGRAPHER Robert Andy Coombs cannot hold his own camera. Mostly paralyzed from the shoulders down after a trampoline accident at age 21, he relies on assistance, and his art takes time to produce. He uses a wheelchair and controls his digital camera via a joystick operated by his mouth. His is among the most unshakable new work, by a new voice, I have come across in years. At the end of 2019, I included Coombs on a top-ten list of the year's best; in the month since, I haven't been able to get his work out of my head.

Coombs's photographs give us a gorgeous orchidology of sexual desire. In them, you can see crescendos of pleasure, helplessness, fear, and taboo, all laced with a tragic-comic self-mocking and a demanding reclamation of the disabled body as autonomous—that is, flush with agency and physical hunger. Male sexual desire is a very complicated terrain to traverse these days; with each photograph, Coombs gives us a new way in.

In the lushly baroque, florid-colored theatricality of the photograph *Ascension to the Throne*, the naked Coombs, 33, with a flesh-colored suprapubic catheter inserted into his midsection, is situated in a partly darkened basement. He's held aloft by three other naked men—a profile of his purpling amethyst body, supple, soft. With dramatic Caravaggesque lighting and the figures highly posed, Coombs is being placed on yet another naked figure, this one on all fours, whose rear is to the viewer. A similar picture in the same basement features Coombs being held in a sitting position by these

naked men over the same figure. Coombs gazes at us, and a strange reversal takes place. He's not just a naked Lady Godiva rider; the body of Coombs is some Christ in Majesty. In fact, the composition echoes Manet's 1864 *Dead Christ With Angels*. The powerlessness of Coombs has shifted to power; he rivets our attention, looking directly at us as if to say, "Yes, this is me"—a servant and a master. The image isn't filled with pathos, pain, pity. There's no shame here or sideshow spectacle. As Mapplethorpe did with formalism and ideas of beauty, dignity, and art, Coombs redefines these things—rescuing them from banishment, guilt, and criminality.

None of this work is cheaply shocking or comes off as porn. It's portraiture, evidence, bearing witness, activism. References abound to Goya, Velázquez, and a whole history of Western painting. I recall an image on his Instagram account of Coombs left alone on the beach. It sent shivers down my spine. Of course, as with numerous queer and disabled artists who post their work on Instagram, Coombs's account was canceled. After I helped reinstate it, the account was canceled again. (You can follow him at @rac.backup.)

Two references may be useful in grasping the deep content in Coombs's work. First, Rembrandt's famous *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). In a scene lit by racking light, a group of black-suited men witness a doctor performing an autopsy. While the corpse—its viscera, deadness, and power—is at the center of the image, no one actually looks at the body. It's rendered a nonbeing, a thing.

This has real parallels to Coombs's project. Instead of looking at the body, most of the men in Rembrandt's painting peer at a textbook in the corner—as if inert, impaired, dead flesh is too much, not reasonable enough, to gaze upon. This metaphor of seeing and not seeing is amplified by the narrative of imagined contagion that is central to Coombs's art. He told me that some men are scared of their "inevitable fragile mortality" and are "deathly afraid of me ... like they're going to catch something and become crippled like me forever." Indeed, I was afraid of him when I first saw his work. In fact, we've never met; he invited me to the studio a year ago and I let it go. Ableist bias, shame, and fear is deeply inculcated.

The second useful reference is Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, in which Chaplin plays both a Jewish barber and the dictator Hynkel. Even in the looming shadow of the Holocaust, we laugh with Chaplin at everyone's plight and folly while also critiquing it. Coombs has this precious gift, opening his world and showing that it is also ours. He does this, like Chaplin, by short-circuiting our defenses with laughter. On top of all that, it helps to imagine Coombs as another kind of Cindy Sherman, always the focal point of his work. However, while Sherman is not really visible and a cipher in her art, Coombs is always out in the world or on location and so is playing the role both of the corpse and the mirror, the dictator and the Jew. Always center stage.

Pull back, and Coombs's art addresses different communities and time frames. For him to do anything entails the assistance or participation of others, lots of preplanning, and research into every condition. In this way, time moves much slower for people with disabilities and calls into question the very idea of "productivity" and how we define artistic production and growth. Nonstop activity is out of the question, which makes the modernist myth of the lone protean genius a complicated one for Coombs.

The sex depicted in Coombs's work has almost never been depicted in the history of art. As he puts it, "There are people with disabilities who have no idea how their body even works sexually because health-care professionals don't cover sexuality as part of their practice. People with disabilities are left to figure out everything on their own. Society doesn't view us as sexual human beings. My work is just scratching the surface of whatever 'disabled sex' looks like ... We need to start shifting the conversation from 'How do you have sex?' to 'What sexual acts do you enjoy?'" ■



The Stacks 1 (2019).

Brain-electrifyingly good **BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS**, by *New York* literary critic **MOLLY YOUNG**



▶ **LIKE MOST HOLIDAYS**, Valentine's Day is a nationally recognized occasion to overdose on sugar and feel lonesome. I do not fight the momentum. Stocking up on seasonal drugstore junk—a fistful of strawberry-crème hearts, a bushel of “bakery fresh” Cupid Kakes—is one of the year's highlights. Nothing makes me happier than assembling a pile of glucose and steadily working through it as I read, my eyes and jaw working in terrible harmony. I'm 99 percent certain that I owe this fondness for eating while reading to my habit of staring at cereal boxes as a kid, which trained me (and many others) to associate feeding with distraction. Healthy? No. American? Yes. Too late to undo? Haven't tried.

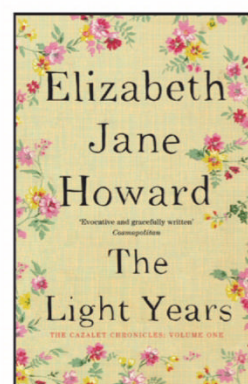
Anyway, books contain all the qualities that I seek in a romantic partner: They are silent, portable, and lurk in libraries. (Just kidding! I think.) Here are some eligible love interests for your appraisal.

**SIGN UP
FOR THE
NEWSLETTER
AT [VULTURE
.COM/READ](https://www.vulture.com/read).**

WTRN*

The Light Years

BY ELIZABETH JANE HOWARD
(FICTION, 1990)



▶ **WHAT APPEARS AT** first to be a clever domestic novel develops a second identity as an ethnology of 1930s English parenting practices. The combination of haute bourgeois atmosphere and anthropological incision is euphoric. The primary quirk, or pathology, of English child-rearing

(specific to this class and era, I assume) is that parents treat their kids like infants from the ages of 0 to 14 and then like full adults starting at 15, with absolutely no intermediate stage. This seems to produce an emotional illiteracy that is ideal for storytelling:

Grisly events unfold beneath a lacy mantle of decorum, character defects compound, and sexual problems erupt.

Midway through telling someone about this book, I realized I didn't know whether it had been published in 1980 or 1945. Timelessness: a great quality in a novel. Plot twist: It was actually published in 1990! Double plot twist: The author was once married to Kingsley Amis.

P.S. I've never seen a novel that was so recklessly undermined by its own cover. Do not judge this one by it.

✓ RECOMMENDED IF YOU LIKE:

- ☐ **Nancy Mitford**
- ☐ **Anything touched by the alabaster hand of Julian Fellowes**
- ☐ **Thriftness as an extreme sport**
- ☐ **Pets with human names**

The Weight of Snow

BY CHRISTIAN GUAY-POLIQUEIN
(FICTION, 2019)



▶ **A READER** recommended this as a “great wintertime page-turner from a Quebec novelist!” and who am I to argue?

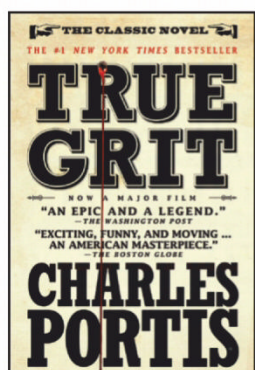
I'm tempted to leave it at that, but I'll add some color in case the reader's endorsement doesn't inveigle you the way it did me. A me-

chanic is maimed in a car wreck one summer and deposited at the door of an old man named Matthias, who has been squatting in the annex of a mansion a few kilometers from a dwindling village. Matthias has been surviving on a combination of his wits, stone soup, and occasional deliveries of firewood.

It becomes clear in the early pages of the book that a calamity has resulted in a nationwide power outage, turning back a couple of centuries of progress and leaving the fate of humanity uncertain. The suspense is in the world-building, which you, reader, have to accomplish by inference. Whose house is Matthias squatting in? What country is this? Why did the power outage occur? Why is everyone dying? Will the narrator survive this winter? Does evil lurk around the corner? What does pemmican taste like? There are 400 times more descriptions of snow than you'd find in the average novel, yet that is precisely the right amount.

True Grit

BY CHARLES PORTIS
(FICTION, 1968)



► TRYING TO GET someone to read a book you're certain they'll love but encountering indifference or resistance is not only annoying but ego damaging. *Why won't you obey my orders?* and *Don't you trust my opinion?* are the two implicit questions in

that situation. Both are things you should never ask a friend, obviously, but that doesn't stop anyone (for example, me) from trying. On which note, I want to issue an apology to everyone who urged me to read *True Grit* over the past decade and got shut down because I'd "already seen the movie."

Look, you guys win because I flushed ten years down the toilet by existing without this text in my database, and that's no small punishment.

The technical accomplishment of *True Grit* is its act of ventriloquism: a middle-aged male author writing in the voice of a grouchy spinster recalling from a distance her interior monologue as a girl tracking and capturing her father's murderer in 1875.

Got that? It doesn't matter, really. "Cool technique" isn't why this book has plunged into my personal canon like Michael Phelps into a tank of chlorine. It's a salty-tongued tale of adventure—that's why!

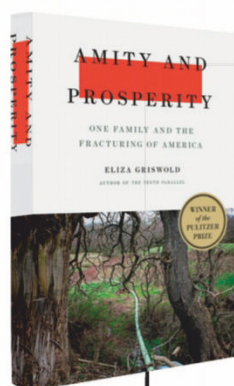
✓ RIYL:

- ❑ Cormac McCarthy
- ❑ Taking the path of maximum resistance
- ❑ Wim Hof
- ❑ Unusual meats
- ❑ Avalanche preparedness
- ❑ Bottle episodes

✓ RIYL:

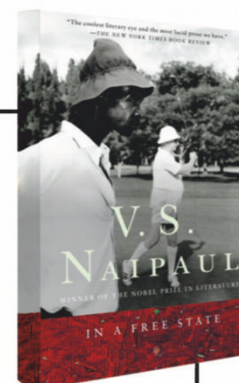
- ❑ Donna Tartt
- ❑ A High Wind in Jamaica
- ❑ Pursuing vendettas
- ❑ Gravy
- ❑ Speeding on the highway
- ❑ Sisyphean tasks

WHY DON'T YOU ...



... PONDER WHETHER

Amity and Prosperity, a 336-page book about fracking, will be riveting enough to get you through a five-hour flight when the poor man next to you is retching uncontrollably into his, and eventually your, barf bag? (Based on a sample size of Molly Young: Yes.)

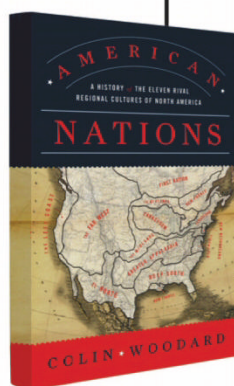


... CAUTERIZE YOURSELF ON

In a Free State, proof that a real asshole can make art that will smack the reservations right out of you?

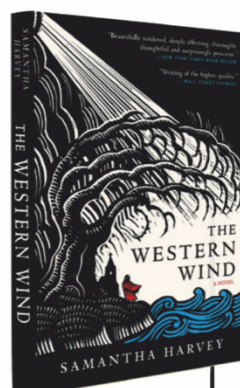
... TEST-DRIVE

American Nations, an irresistible dissection that explains why America is the way it is?



... RUE THE FACT THAT

despite all your rage, you're still just a rat in a cage by identifying with the late-capitalist doom of *Seasonal Associate*?

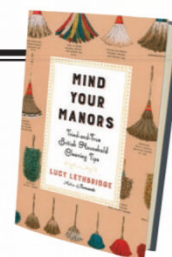
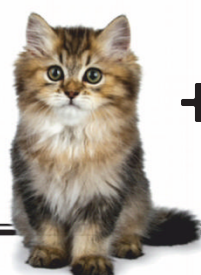


... SWAY ABOUT IN

The Western Wind, which is like if Robert Bresson had gotten obsessed with medieval stuff and written a novel about it?

BONUS!

SUGGESTED PAIRING



Repair the self-befoulment you incurred watching *Don't F**k With Cats* with *Mind Your Manors*, a page-turning (seriously) book of historical cleaning tips.

Janelle Monáe Has Got It Like That

The singer, actor, and leader of a vanguard of “mutants and droids” actually looks like she’s having fun.

By Roxane Gay

TWO DAYS BEFORE the 2019 Grammys, much to the chagrin of her team, Janelle Monáe went skydiving. Her album *Dirty Computer* was nominated for Album of the Year, she was scheduled to perform, and still she and some adventurous friends drove two hours outside Los Angeles on a clear and sunny afternoon. They watched a training video about the inherent risks of throwing yourself from a plane with only a parachute to bring you safely back to earth. As Monáe waited at 14,000 feet, preparing to dive into the great wide blue below her, she was ready. If she died, she thought, at least she would die doing what she wanted. She stared down and marveled at how small the world seemed—tiny houses, tiny cars, tiny people—and in that moment, she felt fearless.

There was something cathartic about that jump, the exhilaration of flying through the air and the simple satisfaction of realizing she had the courage to make that leap. It was the beginning of what would become a year of introspection and evolution for Monáe. “I wanted to skydive into different parts of my life,” she said when we met for dinner in L.A. We were ensconced in a booth in a darkened corner of a private club in West Hollywood where celebrities and other assorted fancy people have to put stickers over their camera lenses before they gather to eat and drink and see and be seen. It’s a silly gesture, because what can be applied can just as easily be unpeeled, but, like airport security, I suppose, it allows members to feel like their privacy is safe.

Monáe was dressed sharply in a matching three-piece suit—black-and-gray pinstripes, a cream-colored silk shirt with wide cuffs, a wide-brimmed black hat, two different earrings, and high-heeled cream booties. Her hair was long, wrapped in a thick braid cascading down her back. As we walked to our table, in a city where a great many people are powerful and gorgeous, so much so that they become unremarkable, she turned heads. She is known for always sporting a different look—a red tuxedo, a thickly brocaded black-and-white dress with a wide skirt, braided buns on each side of her head, a pompadour, her hair slicked close to her scalp. She has absolutely flawless skin, and I often want to ask her about her skin-care regimen, but I never do because I only use water and shower soap and Jergens lotion. There’s no use pretending I would ever expend the energy to do anything more rigorous than that.

We began our conversation talking about the stories Monáe wants to tell—stories that are bold, honest, ones that can shape the culture and have a specific point of view. In many ways, at least to me, Monáe was describing her own body of work. She is ever evolving, experimenting with her aesthetic and her sound, refusing to limit herself professionally or personally. She is daringly herself in an industry that often demands conformity and punishes originality. She actually looks like she is having fun. And still there is an interesting tension in her work: She creates music that allows people to feel seen while maintaining firm boundaries around how much of her truest self we will ever really see.

Janelle Monáe Robinson was born on December 1, 1985, in Kansas City, Kan-



sas, where she nurtured a desire to perform, as did her large, matriarchal family. She participated in talent shows and high-school musicals to hone the ambition that, she says, was in her DNA. Monáe's mom and grandmother instilled a strong work ethic in her, perhaps too strong. When she looked back at her 2019 calendar, she realized she had gone from project to project to project and was emotionally spent. She began to recount everything she did last year; even as a workaholic myself, I found it exhausting. After the Grammys, she performed at Coachella, then she filmed *Antebellum* and then another movie, then she was in preproduction for a television show, and somewhere in there she went on tour, and then the show was in actual production.

New artists are often forced to say yes until they have the power to say no, to compromise their integrity until they have the power not to. Monáe, however, is different. "At the beginning of my career, I always said no," she said. "Nope, nope, nope." That was my secret weapon. Once I started to eliminate the things that didn't feel in line with where I was trying to go, and that could potentially pigeonhole me from having that freedom as an artist, it was very helpful." That selective approach to curating her early career led to the bounty Monáe is currently experiencing. She so distinctly defined who she was that the industry took notice and, in its way, bent to her creative will.

AS SHE BEGAN to assert herself, Monáe was drawn to the idea of the android—someone who is part human, part robot—in order, she now reflected, to protect herself. The android persona gave her a mask beneath which she could hide, something more perfect to which she could aspire. With her debut, a concept album titled *Metropolis: Suite 1 (The Chase)*, she took on the persona of an android, Cindi Mayweather, and would continue to play with that persona and a musical blend of neo-soul and synthesized beats with a hard-rock edge for two more albums, *The ArchAndroid* and *The Electric Lady*.

She had long been interested in science fiction and Afrofuturism, which, for Monáe, represents "the full spectrum of our blackness; where we come from, our present, and our future." She takes an expansive, imaginative view of this spectrum. When I asked her what an Afro-

future looks like, Monáe said, "Right now, it's Lil Uzi Vert being happy with orange locs, Erykah Badu doulaing, Octavia Butler's voice, Stacey Abrams being president and punching Trump out the Oval seat, black people getting passports and hanging out in Africa, black queer lovers holding hands while the pastor smiles, George Clinton's sunglasses in 1974, Prince's eyeliner in *Under the Cherry Moon*, black bodies walking away alive after a police stop, Tierra Whack and Ari Lennox joking on Twitter, black kings in nail polish, Lupita's performance in *Us*. It looks like an orgasm and the big bang happening while skydiving as Grace Jones smiles."

This eclectic vision echoes across all of Monáe's music. "*Dirty Computer* was really a reflection of where I was at that time. I was discovering more and more about my sexuality. I was walking into being more sex positive, also understanding different ways to love and to be loved," she said. The album was accompanied by a 46-minute "emotion picture," in which Monáe plays Jane 57821 in a society where people who don't conform are "dirty computers" and must have their memories erased to clean them into submission.

It is a vision of a dystopian society, responding to our current dystopian moment. Monáe was motivated by the fear she felt after the 2016 presidential election, fear for her safety as a black woman in a world where white supremacists were newly emboldened, fear for the political trajectory of the country. That anxiety fueled the music. She decided to make the album unapologetically black and radical. "It started with who don't I mind pissing off," Monáe said. "I don't mind pissing off conservatives. I don't mind pissing off white men. I don't give a fuck. This is about celebrating. I wanted to celebrate queer black people living outside of what it meant to be American."

Monáe has always been brash and relentless and political in her work and in how she moves through the world. In 2015, she released the song "Hell You Talmbout," on the scourge of police brutality. The lyrics demand that we say the names of black men and women who have been murdered by police. While introducing Kesha's performance at the 2018 Grammys, she said, "We say time's up for pay inequality, time's up for discrimination, time's up for harassment of any kind, and time's up for the abuse of power." Recently, she tweeted #IAmNonBinary, and, as you might expect, people won-

dered what she meant. When I asked, she said, "I tweeted the #IAmNonbinary hashtag in support of Nonbinary Day and to bring more awareness to the community. I retweeted the *Steven Universe* meme 'Are you a boy or a girl? I'm an experience' because it resonated with me, especially as someone who has pushed boundaries of gender since the beginning of my career. I feel my feminine energy, my masculine energy, and energy I can't even explain."

OVER THE COURSE of our conversation, I realized Monáe is one of those artists who have an interesting response to every question. She is deliberate in what she says, purposefully provocative in ways that serve to reinforce her carefully crafted public image. She is well read and voraciously curious. There is a private person behind that image, but it's difficult to truly know who that person is, who and what she loves, what brings her true joy, what she most yearns for. This is not to say we didn't have an intimate conversation, because I think we did, but it was an intimate conversation within very specific boundaries. I very much wanted to ask her about her pansexuality and some of the famous women she has been associated with, so I asked Monáe if she was in a relationship. She smiled demurely and said, "I don't talk about the folks I'm dating," and we left it at that.

She likened the public interest in her personal life to fanfiction; people take what they think they know of her and create stories that are nothing more than figments of the public imagination. And I suppose she's right. That is what we do with celebrities. We finish the incomplete stories about their lives that they offer us in ways that fulfill our own needs and wants. Monáe wasn't closed off, though. She was merely circumspect in entirely reasonable ways. Among other things, she shared that motherhood is one of the dives into the unknown for which she is ready. Like many people, she is trying to find the right time professionally to take a step back to have a child. She wants to make sure she is healthy enough as she recovers from mercury poisoning, which she got after becoming a pescatarian. "I started feeling my mortality," she said.

Though she has been spending more time in Los Angeles, Monáe is based in Atlanta, where she collaborates with the Wondaland Arts Society, an arts collec-

tive determined to spread its reach to every aspect of the entertainment industry. Wondaland is, in Monáe's words, a "school for mutants and droids" and comprises an intimate group of young, black creatives who want to "piss off the Old Guard of gatekeepers who don't understand the value of black-renaissance artists." Monáe is a radical voice looking for other radical voices, and she has built a career on that kind of forward thinking. These days, she is trending toward being as accomplished an actor as she is a musician.

Monáe made her film debut with supporting roles in two movies—the Oscar-winning *Moonlight* and *Hidden Figures*. In April 2020, she will star in *Antebellum*, a "mind-bending social thriller" from the producers of *Get Out* and *Us*. She plays Veronica, a writer with a strong sense of social justice. Details on the film are intentionally vague, but Veronica finds herself in a horrifying reality (the trailer suggests she's trapped in an alternate reality where she is enslaved) and must solve the mystery of how she got there before it's too late. It is reminiscent of Octavia Butler's work, shaping a black future that is inextricable from our past.

Veronica was Monáe's most difficult role yet, with a rigorous filming schedule and the pressure of leading a major motion picture for the first time. These pressures were magnified by the way she works as an actor—the role tends to follow her home during filming. "I want that spirit to always stay on-camera so I don't break. I don't talk on the phone a lot ... I don't want that to take me out of my space." Monáe allows her characters to subsume her. And that approach certainly takes its toll when she is choosing to "dig in and stay there" in a role that deals with trauma. Despite the rigors of her craft, acting is still therapeutic. "I use my pain," she said. "I use it."

The club emptied out as the evening waned, and Monáe suggested that we repair to Wondaland West, the Hollywood Hills home she rents when she is in town. As we were leaving, a seemingly drunk man with strategic scruff and a deliberately casual manner waylaid her. He introduced himself and told Monáe he wanted to talk to her as if he had something of the utmost importance to say. He did not. I stepped aside to give them privacy but did not put too much distance between us because he was clearly hitting on her and she gave no impression that she was at all interested. A few minutes later, as we walked to the

curb to wait for our cars, she thanked me for not leaving her alone. Sometimes celebrities really are just like us, tolerating the attention of obnoxious men with terrible beards.

Wondaland West is one of those homes with a pristine and spectacular view of L.A. Inside the house, there was a large orange trunk I recognized immediately as Beyoncé's new Adidas x Ivy Park collection, which would drop a few days later. *Janelle Monáe has got it like that*, I thought to myself as I stared at the trunk and its contents covetously. I was, I felt, as close to Beyoncé as I had ever been or would ever be. It was a holy moment.

Several members of the Wondaland team gathered to greet me in a flurry of names and kind faces, and I was immediately struck by the genuine camaraderie and affection the group shared. Earlier in the evening, Monáe had said the

**"It looks like
an orgasm
and the big bang
happening
while skydiving
as Grace Jones
smiles."**

Wondaland team is a family, but that's something lots of people say, so I didn't know it was true until I saw them together. They bantered, talked trash, and opined on any number of things, including the 2020 Oscar nominees, the joys of Peloton, and something about "daily rankings."

On a nearby kitchen counter, a fragrant dish was cooking in a Crock-Pot. There was an open Popeyes box. A man sat on the couch with his feet on a pedal exerciser, and another man was slowly cycling to nowhere on a Peloton bike. Four of us immediately sat down to play *Rummikub*. I am extremely competitive, so once I refamiliarized myself with the game's rules, I was determined to dominate. Monáe is competitive too, as was everyone else. It didn't occur to me until much later that perhaps I should not have been playing to win. The game proceeded

apace. I concentrated, studying the game board and my tiles with an undue amount of intensity. My goal, mostly, was to not embarrass myself. Imagine my surprise when I won the first game. I felt stupidly flush with victory.

We immediately began shuffling tiles for a second game. Monáe remarked that the game helps her relax and focus. Sometimes, when she is creatively blocked, a good game of *Rummikub* will help her reach a much-needed breakthrough. The second game was more competitive. I ran the permutations of possible moves over and over in my head as I waited for my turn. I knew what I needed to do to win again. And just as I was ready to lay down my final tile, Monáe, who had been deliberating for quite some time, found her final move, laid down her tile, and won the game. "At least this game was closer," I quipped, and everyone began to laugh.

It was interesting, though, to see how determined Monáe was to win, that her ambition extended even to board games. Earlier in the evening, I had asked her if she could ever achieve enough, and she admitted, "I feel like there's never going to be enough." Even early in her career, she hustled, cleaning houses, working in Office Depot, starting to form her tribe, some of whom were in that house playing *Rummikub* with us. She used the money from her day jobs for studio time. She was pressing her own CDs and selling them out of her car trunk. All the while, she was thinking about the kind of artist she wanted to become. She was thinking about what she was and was not willing to compromise. She was willing to sacrifice becoming a household name to create honest work. She was not going to sacrifice her freedom for fame, and as I looked around that table, it was clear she was surrounded by people who would hold her to that. I asked Monáe what she likes most about her work. "I like how my work reveals itself over time," she said. "It's like a letter you wrote yourself ten years ago, but when you open it in the future, things start to make sense."

After the second game, it was well after midnight, time for me to go home. We assembled around the Beyoncé box, admiring the array of Ivy Park merchandise. Monáe donned a maroon parachute cape, went outside, and began running around the pool deck, the cape billowing behind her, a bright smile stretched across her face. For a moment, as she began to catch the wind in her cape, it looked like she might soar off that deck, still fearless. ■

The CULTURE PAGES

CRITICS

Craig Jenkins on *Circles* ... Jen Chaney on *BoJack Horseman* ...
Helen Shaw on *A Soldier's Play*.

Mac Miller



POP / CRAIG JENKINS

Everybody's Gotta Live

Mac Miller's posthumous album consolidates his musical identities into a unified whole.

OVER THE PAST YEAR or so, through chance or subconscious ambition or some cosmic provenance, I was able to speak with a number of people who knew and worked with Mac Miller. They all give a similar account. Earl Sweatshirt compared his friend, who died of an accidental overdose in September 2018, to a pirate ship on the go: "He was moving real fast." Flying Lotus recalled frequent updates regarding new music when the two lived in the same neighborhood in Los Angeles: "Mac was the best because he was that dude who would always come over with a new batch every season ... He made me feel lazy, and I'm working." "He wanted people to know that there was way more to him than his indie-rap success," Pharrell told me a couple of months ago. "He wanted people to know the layers and the depth of his potential." Miller's career was a delicate dance; he worked hard to get loose from expectations and step into his true potential. He managed by giving the audience a little of what he

knew they wanted, followed by a little of what they might not know he wanted.

You can see this push and pull in the impressive range of *Watching Movies With the Sound Off*, *Faces*, and *GO:OD AM*, and later in the wild swings taken with *The Divine Feminine* and *Swimming*. It's present in the music Miller made outside those albums, in songs made public and ones that have yet to see the light of day. Born Malcolm James McCormick, he grew a following and then set about leading the flock to higher ground. When we spoke on the release date for 2016's *The Divine Feminine* and I asked a question I'd posed to him during the sessions—namely, whether he was worried about alienating those fans who came to his music specifically for lyrical gymnastics with a collection of love songs in which he sang as much as he rapped—he told me succinctly, "People need to expand their minds, me included. The mind is never done expanding."

CIRCLES
MAC MILLER.
WARNER RECORDS.

Miller made good on his end. *Swimming* (2018) bridges the contemplative, melodic side of his music, explored in songs like “Rush Hour” and “REMember,” with the flair and confidence of “Break the Law” and “Here We Go” and his guest features alongside the likes of Earl, Schoolboy Q, and Vince Staples. The album supposed Miller could be devastating and sweet at the same time, that the hardest kind of writing is the honest kind. Truth is the most lacerating bar. True to form, he was already evolving again by the time we heard that one: By the summer of 2018, before *Swimming* came out, he was exploring new concepts, studying icons of the past, and buzzing with melodies from his favorite classic-rock songs. It would be a while before the question of what that was leading to was answered. Now, with the release of *Swimming*’s twin and photographic negative, *Circles*, we get new insight into where Miller was headed.

The album picks up where *Swimming* left off, spiritually and artistically, further consolidating the composite elements of Miller’s creativity into a unified whole. It’ll be a hard left for some listeners. It’s not a rap album in the traditional sense. Rap is a brush in its tool kit; so are funk, folk, and psychedelic rock. “Woods” pairs drum programming evocative of ’80s R&B with gauzy keys, a plaintive vocal, a curt rap, and guitar played by Wendy Melvoin of Prince’s the Revolution and its offshoot Wendy & Lisa. Miller sings over the hip-hop drums of “Complicated” and raps on top of the stately jazz guitar on “Hand Me Downs.” The blend is seamless and unpredictably shiftless. *Circles* is by turns quiet and cozy but also stripped and unnerving. The production, helmed by *Swimming* collaborator Jon Brion, is lush but also light in its touch, as are the vocals, which unpack tough ideas in low, raw tones. “If life is but a dream, then so are we,” Miller muses on “I Can See.” “Why I gotta build something beautiful just to go set it on fire?” he asks on “Good News.”

Circles gives voice to the nagging notes of inadequacy that linger in the margins of our greatest triumphs, movies of uncertainty that play against the backs of our eyelids when we turn out the lights at the end of the evening. *Do people like me? Is my best good enough? Have I discovered my life’s purpose? Is true love on my horizon?* Confident people doubt themselves just as hard as anyone else; their fear is just as true as their bluster. In sharing these parts of himself, Miller arrives at his purest, most compelling artistic statement, a stab at the caliber of songwriting achieved by titans of the form. *Circles* is overcast with a chance of sunshine, both the storm and the ray of light that eventually cracks through the gray sky.

You have to deny frequent and poignant moments of uplift in order to call it purely sad. Its silver lining comes at the cost of a lot of cloud cover.

The emotional duality of this music is never more profound than in the cover of “Everybody’s Gotta Live,” a song by Arthur Lee of the legendary psych-rockers Love. The chorus—“Everybody’s gotta live, and everybody’s gonna die”—is steeped in the chilling acceptance of the inevitability of mortality, which powers Lee’s greatest writing. (If you haven’t already, make haste for the bleak 1967 Summer of Love rejoinder *Forever Changes*.) Death is a part of the cycle of life but not the point of it. The point is to love as much as we can in the space between our tombstone dates. As Miller once put it in “Senior Skip Day,” “Enjoy the best things in your life / ‘Cause you ain’t

gonna get to live it twice.” *Circles* echoes that message in no uncertain terms, the message of “Ladders,” the message of “Aquarium,” of “Objects in the Mirror” and “One Last Thing”: Seek out what you’re good at, and who you’re good with, and never look back.

The last time I saw Mac Miller, he said something that has been my key to understanding the music he left behind in the last year of his life: “I really wouldn’t want just happiness. And I don’t want just sadness, either. I don’t want to be depressed. I want to be able to have good days and bad days.” Much will be made of the stark contrast between the warm, perseverant *Swimming* and the wearier, groggier *Circles*. I see Malcolm in the balance, a poet who made the most of his 26 years between heaven and hell, a stargazer who did his best to stay grounded until the clouds came calling. ■

TV / JEN CHANEY

Pony Problems

BoJack Horseman’s final season wrestles with guilt and forgiveness.



THE “DIFFICULT MEN” ERA of modern television theoretically ended when *Mad Men* concluded back in 2015. But look around. There are still plenty of television shows that center on male anti-heroes: narcissistic, unethical, and/or criminal guys who seem incapable of change. There’s *Better Call Saul* and *Ozark* and *Narcos* (now *Narcos: Mexico*) and *The New Pope* and *Ray Donovan*. Bad dudes struggling to touch base with their inner Jiminy Crickets haven’t entirely disappeared from the TV landscape, but the TV landscape has swelled to such an extent over the past five years that they feel less central to it. There’s more space than ever to tell episodic stories and more freedom to center those stories on people who aren’t awful guys coming to terms with their bad behavior.

BOJACK
HORSEMAN
NETFLIX.



That brings me to *BoJack Horseman*, the brilliant Netflix series about a man—well, technically, a horse—who possesses all the qualities of a classic TV anti-hero. He's self-involved, inconsiderate, alcoholic, drug-addicted, sometimes misogynistic, emotionally abusive, and largely oblivious to the consequences of his actions, and he has spent five and a half seasons trying desperately to change all that. The second half of *BoJack's* sixth and final season allows him one last grasp at redemption.

Because *BoJack Horseman* is also a Hollywood satire that underscores the hypocrisy of the entertainment industry, the concluding eight episodes serve as a commentary on how our culture grants absolution and the way it lionizes men for simply owning up to, if not fully correcting, their mistakes. It's a comedy that aggressively wrestles with what it means to be a man and to be a TV show attempting to address toxic masculinity.

As they've done throughout the series, especially in later seasons, *BoJack* creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg and his team make a point of emphasizing that the world stretches beyond the concerns of one flawed equine male. Unlike the holy trinity of Difficult Men prestige dramas—*The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad*, and *Mad Men*, which zero in on their protagonists in their closing moments—*BoJack Horseman* ends with a two-shot, a reminder that this series was never just about a single (horse)man. If *Mad Men* felt like the end of a specific chapter in anti-heroic TV, *BoJack Horseman*, which debuted less than a year before *Mad Men's* finale, serves as the epilogue that officially closes the book.

As the concluding stretch begins, BoJack, the former star of the '90s sitcom *Horsin' Around*, voiced with gravelly sarcasm and melancholy by Will Arnett, seems to be in a good place. He's out of rehab and living clean. With his brown mane now an appropriately sober gray, he's teaching drama at Wesleyan University and actually enjoying working with the students. Then he gets word that reporter Paige Sinclair (voiced by Paget Brewster as if she were a graduate of Rosalind Russell's *His Girl Friday* School of Journalism) is working on some sort of exposé about something awful he did in the past. "They can't get me on old shit," BoJack protests. "I'm a different person now." As most of us know: Yes, "they" totally can get you on old shit and often with good reason. Neither of BoJack's closest friends—Diane (Alison Brie) and his agent, Princess Carolyn (Amy Sedaris)—will let him play the victim in this situation. The show doesn't either.

BoJack Horseman handles the developments in its long-running Me Too-style story line with the show's signature mix of thoughtfulness, earned snark, and occa-

sional outright silliness. It does the same thing in its treatment of Diane, who earns almost as much screen time as BoJack as she adjusts to taking antidepressants, living with her boyfriend in Chicago ("Why does everything have to be 'Chicago style' here?," she laments. "We get it. We're in Chicago"), and attempting to write a book. Diane's struggle with depression is handled with humor—in a brief, upbeat musical sequence, she keeps holding up her bottle of meds like she's starring in an old Mentos commercial—as well as great care and sincerity.

While making space for a woman's experience, *BoJack Horseman* sneaks in some hilarious jabs at film and TV projects that try to gain feminist credibility for doing the same thing on a more superficial basis. When Princess Carolyn expresses interest in having Sofia Coppola direct a new *Robin Hood* from Maid Marian's point of view, she's told that Coppola is "booked for the next year developing a new *Peter Pan* from Wendy's point of view." Very few shows

could incorporate that many serious, comedic, and meta fabrics into a single thread and effectively pull it through the eye of a needle, but *BoJack Horseman* does it with ease. It's one of many reasons why I already miss this smart, simultaneously earnest and cynical show.

The animators don't say good-bye without giving us a few more of their ingenious visual gags that flash by so quickly they can easily be dismissed, if not missed entirely. Even those sometimes signify something valuable. In one of the final episodes, there's one instance, lasting just a few seconds, in which firefighters attempt to rescue a cat from a tree. The cat is sitting on a branch and holding a briefcase. "Guys," she says apologetically, "I'm really sorry this keeps happening." That's the central message of *BoJack Horseman* tucked into one clever little joke. We all have animal instincts, and we try repeatedly to overcome them. But sometimes we need extra hands to carry us and place us back on the ground. ■

THEATER / HELEN SHAW

Red(neck) Herrings

After four decades and one Pulitzer, *A Soldier's Play* comes to Broadway.



CHARLES FULLER'S 1981 *A Soldier's Play*, an investigative procedural as crisply executed as a military heel-turn, has premiered uptown at last. What took so long? When it first ran, it was one of the great success stories of the Off Broadway Negro Ensemble Company and a star-making hit for actors like Samuel L. Jackson and Denzel Washington. When Fuller adapted it as a film (renamed *A Soldier's Story*), he was nominated for an Oscar. The play itself won a Pulitzer. But Kenny Leon's production for Roundabout Theatre Company is only now coming to Broadway.

Plays stay in the imagination only if they're revived or taught. For years, *A Soldier's Play* was caught between two stools: too conventional for the formalists (it has the rhythms of a *Law & Order* episode), too serious about internalized racism for the feel-good entertainment junkies. It's also almost fetishistically male. The narrator hero is a military lawyer, Captain Davenport (Blair Underwood), who wears mirrored sunglasses and generally acts like a badass, hard-edged supercop. One-third of the available stage time involves Davenport slowly standing up from the edge of a desk and snapping a salute. The second act opens with his buttoning a shirt over a shining chest, a kind of worshipful moment for masculine perfection. I don't know how audiences handled it in 1981, but when I saw it, a woman in front of me groaned out loud. That's a hard quality to capture in a classroom.

A Soldier's Play opens with a murder. On a high platform at the back of the stage, we see the middle-aged Sergeant Waters (David Alan Grier) stumbling drunk. "They'll still hate you!" he shouts at an unseen figure, laughing strangely. "They still hate you!" Two

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gunshots. When the lights come back up, it's 1944 in the barracks at Fort Neal, Louisiana, where a company of black soldiers is being roughly searched for weapons. The sergeant's body has been found, and, sure that Klan members from the nearby town have killed Waters, the military brass is eager to clamp down on any hypothetical reprisals. The white Captain Taylor (Jerry O'Connell) doesn't seem to like confining his men to base, but what he likes even less is the arrival of Davenport, the black officer tasked with the investigation. The play then consists of Davenport's interrogations—which lead to flashbacks of Waters's interactions with the other soldiers—and Taylor's carping at Davenport's process.

On one level, the play is pleasurable as a murder mystery that parcels out its information carefully, full of misdirections and red(neck) herrings. That pleasure lingers, though the stories about Waters get more and more terrible—we see his resolve to gain power in the white man's Army, his vitriolic hatred of black Southerners, and his harassment of the sweet-tempered Private C. J. Memphis (J. Alphonse Nicholson) for being an “ignorant low-class Geechee.” As the whodunit fun starts to turn cold and frightening, Grier's performance becomes the show's main engine. He machines each of his scenes to the inch, developing his character from a comic tin-pot bellow into villainy and then, remarkably, something more tragic.

Director Leon loosens the play's rather careful detective-logic plot by filling the transitions with singing—the men frequently strike up a cappella harmonies, beating on their own bodies as percussion. In casting, Leon has clearly focused on the fact that the company is also a baseball team. (Borrowing the officers' racism, Waters both hates and prizes his men's ability to beat white players.) The stars of the team, Memphis and Private First Class Melvin Peterson (Nnamdi Asomugha), move like athletes, but there's always a logic to how the group moves onstage. There's a palpable sense of a team at work.

Fuller took two things as his inspiration for *A Soldier's Play*: his own time in the Army and Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd*. In that weird, quasi-religious book, Billy, the “handsome sailor” beloved by his fellow shipmates, attracts the hatred of an officer called Claggart, who frames him for mutiny. Fuller chose to let Billy/Memphis slide almost out of focus (he suffers but is mainly offstage) and look instead at the Claggart figure: His Waters is a man drowning in hatred. If you have the Melville in mind, with its backdrop of British naval abuses, you'll know to blame the Army for Waters's damage even before the



From left, Warner Miller, Nnamdi Asomugha, and Blair Underwood.

exposition makes it clear. It also might explain the look of this production. Derek McLane's huge wooden matrix seems at times like a ship's dockyard scaffolding extending out of sight.

In 1983, Amiri Baraka took serious exception to *A Soldier's Play* and to Fuller's “descent into Pulitzerland.” In an incendiary essay for *Black American Literature Forum*, Baraka attacked Fuller's plot as cowardly and reactionary, particularly given that he believed the Peterson character (originally played by Denzel Washington) was coded as Malcolm X. Peterson's violence in the play and the price he pays for it seemed to Baraka to be a punishment leveled at all black radicals (perhaps even meant to keep white audiences placated), and he hated the way the play's sympathies are funneled toward Davenport's starched, “soldier in the man's Army” correctness. By the time Baraka calls the Negro Ensemble Company a “house slave's theater,” most readers are backing nervously away from the page. But then Baraka's rhetoric is often this way—a bazooka at a knife fight.

You can understand a little of what was eating at him, though. Despite its rich inquiries into respectability politics, colorism, black anti-southern bias, and white terrorism, *A Soldier's Play* cossets northern white sensibilities in two respects. First, it is safely set far away in the South, where those “real” bigots live. And second, while the narrator is Davenport and the plum role is Waters, the man who changes the most is Taylor. Fuller's compositional complexity can flatten and turn didactic around this character—perhaps because sentiment is

often how writers try to change hearts and minds. That small soft spot remains in this production. For instance, at their farewell encounter, captains Davenport and Taylor finally and meaningfully shake hands. In this, Leon's staging echoes a moment in Norman Jewison's film of the play. (Not for nothing, Jewison's movie *In the Heat of the Night* also ends with a handshake between a northern black investigator and a white racist who has gradually learned to respect him.) There's a world of absolution and reassurance in that kind of handshake.

Taylor, though, is a pinprick. When he isn't onstage, we're in the more complicated Melvillean world of the men in the barracks, where Memphis bewitches and annoys them with his farm-boy belief in Farmer's Dust (a container of dirt he swears has lucky powers); Waters turns military protocol into a weapon; and Army life, with the constantly withheld possibility of war, seems to run endlessly and pointlessly around the bases. That, for me, is *A Soldier's Play*'s greatest decoration—the very real rhythms of life in uniform, once part of men's common experience and now largely lost in the modern theater. But when it comes to this production, the medal has to go to David Alan Grier. His performance has size and precision, monstrosity and humanity. Technically, he is playing Waters. But it seemed at times as if he were portraying an entire Shakespeare play. Sometimes he was Iago; sometimes he was Othello. And in the moment that he crashed to the floor, both sinned against and sinning, he was somehow a soldier playing both at once. ■

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The CULTURE PAGES

To Do



Twenty-five things to see, hear, watch, and read.

FEBRUARY 5-19

POP MUSIC

1. Listen to Father of All Motherfuckers

Pop-punk godfathers.

Reprise Records, February 7.

Green Day follows the scathing screeds of 2016's *Revolution Radio* with another sharp left on its shortest set yet. *Father's* ten fleeting tracks seek common ground between punk rock and Motown, hitting the mark hardest in the title song and the Joan Jett-sampling "Oh Yeah!" CRAIG JENKINS

TV

2. Watch High Fidelity

This time, the record store's in Crown Heights.

Hulu, February 14.

A series may seem like overkill when *High Fidelity* has already been adapted to film. But then you see Zoë Kravitz as the protagonist instead of John Cusack and, honestly, you're pretty sold on the concept. JEN CHANEY

MOVIES

3. See Downhill

Fresh from Sundance.

In theaters February 14.

Jim Rash and Nat Faxon's remake (co-written with *Succession's* Jesse Armstrong) of Swedish director Ruben Östlund's 2014 marital comedy-drama *Force Majeure* has an awkward, slow-burning American charm all its own. Will Ferrell and Julia Louis-Dreyfus are terrific as a couple on the outs after he casually abandons the family during what at first appears to be a deadly avalanche. He's a guy who can amiably lumber through life with a chuckle; she's a traumatized woman who can't afford to. *Downhill* luxuriates in this tension. It's a genuinely unnerving little movie. BILGE EBIRI

CLASSICAL MUSIC

4. Hear New York Philharmonic

Playing work by an electroacoustic composer.

Geffen Hall, February 5 to 11.

The orchestra was a venerable, strictly male institution 100 years ago when the 19th Amendment was ratified. Now it's celebrating the centennial with "Project 19," a multiyear effort featuring one commissioned work from each of 19 women composers. It's launching with a new piece by Nina C. Young, who's in good company on the program with Mozart and Haydn. JUSTIN DAVIDSON

ART

5. See Michael Rakowitz

An Iraqi-American artist.

Jane Lombard Gallery, 518 West 19th Street, through February 22.

Activist-artist Michael Rakowitz reconstructs reliefs from an ancient palace at Nimrud (now part of northern Iraq) that was destroyed by ISIS in 2015. He twists the psychic knife by giving the dates of the destruction of each part as well as the history of European-American looting of this once-glorious site. JERRY SALTZ

TV

6. Watch Locke & Key

Unlocking secrets.

Netflix, February 7.

The adaptation of the comic-book series, written by Joe Hill and illustrated by Gabriel Rodriguez, once stuck in development slo-mo, is finally out. The premise: Following a tragic loss, the Locke family moves to Massachusetts, where they take up residence in an old mansion known as the Keyhouse because it's filled with magical (and kind of creepy)

keys. A suggestion: Perhaps you guys should find a long-term Airbnb instead? J.C.

BOOKS/READINGS

7. & 8. **Read** Weather and See Jenny Offill

Worry warts.

Knopf, February 11; Books Are Magic, 225 Smith Street, Cobble Hill, February 11; McNally Jackson, 52 Prince Street, February 12.

Jenny Offill's magnificent new novel follows a librarian named Lizzie as she trips through modern life answering emails for a mentor's climate-change podcast (brilliantly called *Hell and High Water*) and slowly collapsing inside her own doomsday fears. Told in exquisite, perfectly shaped fragments, writes Vulture's Hillary Kelly, *Weather* is a book of prayer and a Book of Revelation. Catch Offill in conversation at Books Are Magic and McNally Jackson this month.

THEATER

9. **See** Paris

How much box should a big box box?

Atlantic Stage 2, through February 16.

Looked at in a certain light, Eboni Booth's beautifully executed drama about a woman working in the stockroom of a big-box store is an exercise in careful characterization, exquisite pacing, and throwback-to-1995 nostalgia. It's also, though, a chilling horror story about a monster with many tentacles: that old devil work-till-you-drop capitalism. But comic performances by Danielle Skraastad and Eddie K. Robinson make it a joy. It's like *Parasite* goes to Walmart—you learn what lies beneath. HELEN SHAW

POP MUSIC

10. **See** Tanya Tucker

Now a Grammy winner.

Town Hall, February 7.

Texas outlaw-country legend Tanya Tucker scored her first No. 1 at age 14 with the 1973 hit "What's Your Mama's Name." Her storied career led to duets with Glen Campbell and Emmylou Harris; last month, she won her first two Grammys. She'll run through her classics live along with cuts from her Grammy winner *While I'm Livin'*. C.J.

OPERA

11. **See** Agrippina

A black comedy.

Metropolitan Opera, opens February 6.

An imperial capital aflame with shady power grabs, family intrigue, sexual aggression, and a round-robin of betrayals—who said opera isn't like real life? Ancient Rome looks oddly familiar in David McVicar's production of Handel's 300-year-old show, starring the queen of mezzos, Joyce DiDonato. J.D.

TV

12. **Watch** The 92nd Academy Awards

Still so white.

ABC, February 9.

Once again, the big Oscars broadcast will go host-

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less. But isn't Brad Pitt, likely to win his first acting Oscar, really the host of this affair? J.C.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

13. **Hear** Caroline Shaw

A composer portrait.

Miller Theatre, February 6.

Shaw was a freelance violinist, a singer in an experimental a cappella group, and a rookie composer when she won the Pulitzer Prize in 2013. Now, armed with the experience to match her talents, she joins the Attacca Quartet and So Percussion for a program of her fine-grained, deceptively simple-sounding music. J.D.

MOVIES

14. **See** Pandora and the Flying Dutchman

British Technicolor.

Quad Cinema, opens February 7.

One of the most gorgeous color films of all time also happens to be one of the strangest. Ava Gardner is the much-coveted nightclub singer incapable of loving anybody, James Mason is the haunted Dutch captain with a sinister past, condemned to travel the seas for eternity until he finds a woman willing to die for him. Albert Lewin's mesmerizing film boasts a dreamlike plot that blends elements of fantasy, mystery, romantic melodrama, and noir. Newly restored. B.E.

POP MUSIC

15. **Listen to** The Slow Rush

Finally.

Modular/Island Australia Records, February 14.

Australian psych-rock outfit Tame Impala's new set expands lead Kevin Parker's musical range in every direction, gesturing at progressive rock on "Posthumous Forgiveness," dabbling in disco on "Borderline," detouring into gauzy album rock on "It Might Be Time," and testing out West African rhythms on "Lost in Yesterday." C.J.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

16. **Hear** The Mother of Us All

Susan and the suffragettes.

Metropolitan Museum, February 8 to 14.

The New York Philharmonic ventures into new territory with a staging of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson's suffrage opera about Susan B. Anthony, performed in the Met Museum's American Wing. This is not a show full of impassioned monologues and scenes at the barricades, though; Thomson presents political turmoil in defiantly unturbulent music that envelops the audience in a gentle, protominimalist lilt. J.D.

ART

17. **See** Samba in the Dark

From "Apesar de Você (In Spite of You)."

Anton Kern Gallery, 16 East 55th Street, through February 15.

Inspired by the 1970 Brazilian protest song that attacks totalitarianism, this group show of South

FEB 14–23

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American artists speaks loud and clear to the current wave of right-wing governments ascending around the world. Exuberance and power mix in work that virtually sings its songs of the rottenness of governments, infrastructures in decay, and art so strong that it won't be denied. J.S.

TV

18. Watch Homeland

To Afghanistan, again.

Showtime, February 9.

Take one more trip down Highly Stressful Lane with the eighth and final season of *Homeland*, in which Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes, still fantastic) gets sent on a mission to Kabul. I know this sounds hard to believe, but: She's going to be in serious danger. J.C.

DANCE

19. See Mitten Wir im Leben Sind

Tanz-tanz revolution.

NYU Skirball Center, through February 15.

We're in a flush of work right now from the great choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, the Belgian movement genius whose endurance-minimalism style you'll have seen everywhere from Beyoncé videos to Ivo van Hove's production of *West Side Story*. *Mitten Wir im Leben Sind* is her forensic yet meditative work made to Bach's six cello suites. Existential difficulty and resilience are its themes: Chalk geometries onstage remind you of both Pythagoras and a crime scene, and the cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras plays for two unbroken hours and five dancers, including the nearly 60-year-old De Keersmaeker. H.S.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

20. Hear Nathan Laube

A renowned organist.

St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, February 15.

There's no sound quite like the tyrannosaurish roar of a pipe organ. And while Lincoln Center tries to figure out how to squeeze a scaled-down instrument into the future Geffen Hall, a few churches have a monopoly on the real thing. Laube fires up one of the city's great instruments for a midafternoon dose of Bach, Liszt, and Wagner. J.D.

REMEMBERING TONI MORRISON

Three ways to celebrate the late novelist's birthday on February 18.

Brooklyn Museum,
6 p.m., 200 Eastern Parkway

The inaugural Toni Morrison Festival honoring her life and legacy with Pulitzer winners in tow.

The Center for Fiction,
6:30 p.m., 15 Lafayette Avenue, Fort Greene

A screening of the documentary *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*. A talk with director Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and writer Rachel Eliza Griffiths follows.

92nd Street Y,
8 p.m., 1395 Lexington Avenue

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BOOKS

21. **Read** *Such a Fun Age*
Lena Waithe already has the adaptation rights.

G.P. Putnam's Sons.

In Kiley Reid's first novel, a young black babysitter takes a white child on an evening run to a fancy supermarket in Philadelphia. When a security guard accuses her of kidnapping the kid, it sets the stage for an exploration of race and class and what it means to raise someone else's children.

TV

22. **Watch** *The Good Lord Bird*

Based on a National Book Award winner.

Showtime, February 16.

Ethan Hawke executive-produces and stars in this adaptation of the novel by James McBride, which revisits, through the eyes of a young slave (Joshua Caleb Johnson), the 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry that was spearheaded by abolitionist John Brown (Hawke). Spoiler alert: This event was a precursor to the Civil War.

J.C.

MOVIES

23. **See** *Clueless*

Before it becomes a TV series.

Metrograph, February 8 and 9.

Amy Heckerling's modern-day Beverly Hills-set take on *Emma* is now such a classic that it may have surpassed even Jane Austen's original novel (which is getting a new movie adaptation) in esteem. Starring Alicia Silverstone as savvy, chatty high-schooler Cher Horowitz, the film may look on the surface like your average teen comedy, but Heckerling has an anthropologist's eye and a linguist's ear. She captures the intonations and behaviors of these kids with such love, clarity, and creativity that the film both reflects its milieu and, in turn, influenced it.

B.E.

POP MUSIC

24. **Listen to** LP5

From Miranda Lambert's favorite songwriter.

Old Omens/Thirty Tigers Records, February 7.

Nobody does sad-bastard mode sadder or harder than John Moreland, and his new release continues the trend. Though Moreland's production has a bit more gloss this time out, the Oklahoma native's hard-won candor is on full display. Cathartic. Comforting. Necessary.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

25. **Hear** Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique

Another all-Beethoven program.

Carnegie Hall, February 19 to 24.

If you're going to hear just one Beethoven piece in 2020—wait, who are you kidding; it's his 250th anniversary, so it'll be a trick to hear much of anything else—you might make it a symphony led by Sir John Eliot Gardiner. The fiery conductor and the original-instruments ensemble he founded march through all of them in five back-to-back, likely-to-be-electric concerts.

J.D.

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SOLUTION TO LAST ISSUE'S PUZZLE

V	A	R	I	A	N	T		L	I	M	B	O		C	A	R	M	E	L	A					
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

criminal complaint, and drove the THC oil back to Wisconsin nonstop in a rental car.)

Courtney Huffhines seemed more concerned. On the same day as Tyler's departure, she shared an article about the vaping epidemic with her sons by cell phone, according to police, and imparted some motherly advice: "And it's not a joke. They have huge warnings out. Btw it is all vape and e Devices. So might need to look into another business."

It's not clear how many THC runs Tyler made or when he made them. (The police later alleged he went to California and Colorado to obtain vaping liquids.) But over the summer, there was a dramatic change in black-market THC supplies in California, according to industry observer Peter Hackett. As California regulators began to phase in tighter regulations for legal marijuana producers, the state ratcheted up quality-control rules, cracked down on illegal growers in Humboldt County, and issued warnings to thousands of producers that their temporary licenses were about to expire. All those actions, culminating in the spring of 2019, conspired to produce a sharp decline in supplies of THC oil, according to Hackett. To compensate for the sudden shortfall, he says, some black-market producers began to use thickeners and additives to meet demand. "Enter Honey Cut," he says, naming one of the most common adulterants containing vitamin E acetate.

At approximately 6 a.m. on the morning of September 5, police raided the condo in Bristol Bay, Wisconsin. They found, according to a later criminal complaint, 31,200 vape cartridges, each filled with about one gram of THC oil and representing more than a million dollars in street value; approximately 98,000 unfilled vape cartridges; 57 Mason jars, each filled with nearly one liter of "high quality" THC oil; approximately 18.5 pounds of marijuana; three money-counting machines; syringes used to fill empty vape cartridges manually; and scads of colorful "branded" counterfeit packaging that included "Chronic Sour Patch," "Chronic White Runtz," "Dabwoods Peaches & Cream," and "Dank Bubblegum," among many other flavors. As Sheriff Beth pointed out at a press confer-

ence the following week, "It looks like candy in these vaping cigarettes. It's not candy. It's highly potent drugs."

There is little doubt that black-market THC cartridges are linked to the disease outbreak in Wisconsin—state health officials received test results, reportedly in October, showing that "a number of THC products" connected to the outbreak, including some from a patient at Children's Wisconsin, contained vitamin E acetate, according to a state health spokesperson. But direct links to the Huffhines operation, while typical of the black-market THC economy nationwide, remain unclear. "There is nothing that ties those materials that were found in that condominium to any injuries or deaths anywhere in the world," says Mark Richards, Tyler Huffhines's attorney, accurately. And as of last month, local authorities say they still have not received test results from the FDA on the THC cartridges seized in the condo raid. (An agency spokesperson says the FDA does not comment on "ongoing investigations.")

At the same time as the condo raid, police executed a search warrant at the Huffhines family home in Paddock Lake, one block from Westosha Central High School. The raid yielded drug paraphernalia, 0.6 grams of cocaine in Jacob's room, nine cell phones, 11 guns, and \$59,000 in cash. Several weeks later, police raided the real-estate office of Courtney Huffhines in nearby Union Grove, seizing evidence suggesting that it too had been used as a base to process THC cartridges. All three Huffhineses have been charged with multiple felony counts connected with the drug operation (and all three have pleaded not guilty). Tyler and Jacob have been in the Kenosha County jail since September; Courtney is out on bail.

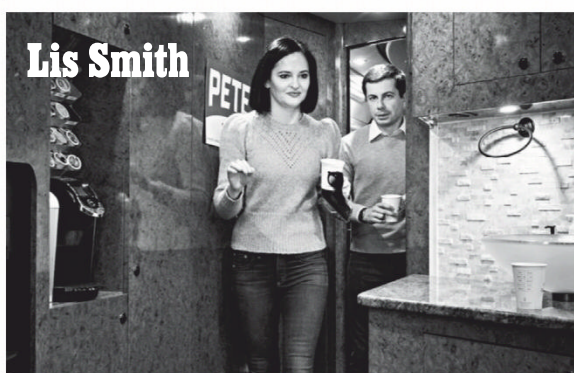
Additional evidence fell into the laps of investigators even as they announced the arrests of Tyler and Jacob Huffhines on September 11. "On the day we did the first press conference," Beth told me, "we had a local U-Haul office call us and say, 'Hey, I've got this eight-by-eight-by-five-foot crate that just arrived for Tyler Huffhines. Do you want it?' And we're like, 'Yes!'" The crate contained more empty THC cartridges and fresh packaging "waiting to get filled," Beth says. That was the same day that President Trump, in response to the burgeoning epidemic, promised sweeping federal action to ban flavored vaping products to protect children.

SO LONG AS MILLIONS of young Americans continue to become addicted, figuratively if not literally, to getting their nicotine (and their highs) from the end of a vape pen, amateurs like the Huffhines will continue

to be drawn to the margins of a market worth billions. But vaping is hardly a game for amateurs anymore. Almost all the top e-cigarette brands in the country have become extensions of Big Tobacco: The Vuse brand is owned by R.J. Reynolds; blu is owned by Imperial Brands; Logic is owned by Japan Tobacco; and in December 2018, Altria—the American-based spinoff of Philip Morris—acquired a 35 percent stake in Juul for \$12.8 billion. Altria has recently written down two-thirds of that investment, but the aggressive wave of acquisition remains the quiet fulfillment of a prophecy made by a tobacco-industry executive about alternatives to tobacco that UCSF researchers unearthed in the Big Tobacco archives: "If anyone is going to take away our business, it should be us."

Many of those companies, and many e-cigarette lobbying groups, were in the room when the White House held a "listening session" (Politico called it a "vaping shoutfest") on November 22. And it surprised no one who has battled Big Tobacco over the previous decades—including Matthew Myers of Tobacco-Free Kids, who was also in the room—that when the government finally acted on President Trump's September vow to ban all flavored e-cigarettes, the regulations included what Myers called "a giant loophole."

On the afternoon of December 31, administration sources revealed that the sweeping ban on flavored e-cigarettes would be more modest: Only "closed" pod systems (such as Juul) would be affected, and menthol (the basis of "mint," one of the most appealing flavors to teenage vapers) was exempted from the ban. "Open" tank systems, which allow users to refill their vaping containers with any flavored juice they want, and the cheap and increasingly popular disposable systems also fell outside regulation. According to press accounts in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, Brad Parscale, manager of Trump's 2020 presidential campaign, played a major role in shaping the new public-health policy, pushing the administration to back off a more comprehensive ban on flavors because of potential political backlash from the Trump base. The Trump policy has been denounced by the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. After a spokesperson maintained that Melania Trump still "does not believe e-cigarettes or any nicotine products should be marketed or available to children," her husband overshadowed her concern with his personal regrets. "I never should have done that fucking vaping thing," he said. ■



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

for him on the Obama 2012 campaign—Smith was “a standout,” he told me—and continues to seek his advice informally. (Both were at pains to emphasize that Axelrod has no formal advisory role.) Axelrod is, she told me, “to some extent, someone who I want to be, you know?”

Early on, Smith said, she liked that Buttigieg was moving in a different direction from other Democrats, who were trying to meet the challenge of Trump with pugilism or by following a mantra of former Obama attorney general Eric Holder: “When they go low, we kick them.” Instead, Buttigieg oozed preternatural calm. The attraction may have been that Buttigieg was simply so at odds with what was already out there. Smith tried to explain it to me: “Growing up, my favorite band was Guns N’ Roses. My older brother was into it. I was obsessed with Axl Rose. But then one day, I listened to Radiohead. And I was like, *This is so fucking different. I don’t even know what this is, but I like it.*”

Smith also cultivates comparisons of Buttigieg to Obama, telling me that they’re both “people who don’t view the world in just very stark, black-and-white terms where you’re a good person or a bad person.”

I asked Axelrod if Smith had found her own Obama figure in Buttigieg, but he politely rebuffed the idea. “I think Pete has an agile and interesting mind,” he said, but Obama possessed other qualities. “He had extraordinary intellectual power but also a great humanity.”

WHEN I SAW SMITH in Santa Monica, it was a day before the last debate of 2019, and she was holed up with Buttigieg to prep. It’s in debates that a sharper side—a more Smith-like side—of Buttigieg emerges. When Warren attacked him for his “wine cave” fund-raiser, he shot back that he was the only non-millionaire or -billionaire onstage. “This is the problem with issuing purity tests you cannot yourself pass,” he said. “The dynamic in debate prep, I can guarantee,” McAuliffe said, “is she’s telling Pete, ‘You go after them, you go for the jugular, you don’t stop.’ I mean, she’s a fighter. She takes no prisoners.”

Jugular is a word that came up often when people talked about Smith, and she would certainly take the characterization as a compliment. “It’s important on a campaign to have spokespeople and to have people in public-facing roles who can go a little farther and be a little edgier than what the candidate is going to do,” Smith said. Like when she called Cynthia Nixon “unhinged” on Twitter during the actress’s primary challenge of Cuomo. She can be frank about “the edifice of politics,” one reporter said. The reporter recalled a conversation they’d had during a news cycle in which a shooting occurred while another candidate was rolling out his campaign—television news was covering the shooting, not the candidate. As in a cold-blooded and theatrical *West Wing* hallway conversation, she confided that these were the sorts of things that kept her up at night, the ways a national tragedy could affect a campaign.

Singer thinks the analogy doesn’t even cut it. “I always joked with her [that] you couldn’t make up Lis Smith. If Lis Smith was a *West Wing* character, you would roll your eyes.”

Many of the people I talked to described Smith as talented, though a little difficult at times, but in the same breath acknowledged that it might sound sexist to characterize her as such—they didn’t mean it to be. Her colleagues in the flacking profession can seem irritated by the high profile she keeps. “Sometimes she forgets that she’s the staffer, and ultimately our job as the staffer is to communicate on behalf of our principal,” the operative who has worked on campaigns with Smith told me. Even Smith loyalists will admit that, at times, she can be a lot: “Sometimes I felt like she was a little out of control, but I never felt like it was unfair,” Singer said.

Her instinct for the jugular can also misfire. Back in October, a story appeared in the McClatchy-owned newspaper *The State* that described a focus group of black voters in South Carolina and surmised that some of Buttigieg’s struggles with black support might have to do with homophobia in the black community. (The campaign has recently struggled with public complaints by its own minority staffers that senior management didn’t listen to their concerns about Buttigieg’s poor showing in communities of color.) MSNBC analyst Zerlina Maxwell tweeted, “I am offended that some folks in the media are covering Mayor Pete like he can win when he’s at zero with the base of the Democratic Party. BLACK PEOPLE. Your bias is showing so please be aware and tuck it in.” Smith responded, “I would agree that bias is showing, but it ain’t from those folks.”

(Smith’s tweet has since been deleted.)

The campaign denied leaking the story, but I had my suspicions, given that Smith and the story’s author appear to be friends. I asked one person about a post on Smith’s Instagram that suggested (jokingly, it seemed, but still) that they had been engaged and broken it off. When I went back to reference the picture, it had been erased.

It was one of several instances in which I was pretty sure my questions to others were being poured back into Smith’s ear. Once she’d agreed to be interviewed, Smith was mostly friendly over text, making small talk but also letting me know she knew that I’d talked to a variety of political notables, often just hours after I’d gotten off the phone with them: “Omg lol terry just texted me. How was your convo???” Smith mentioned that she’d told the bartender at the place we’d planned to meet for our first sit-down that she’d be bringing a reporter in for a drink. What, I wondered, was he supposed to have done with that inside information? Mix mine a little stronger?

ON MY LAST NIGHT in Santa Monica, I watched the debate in my hotel room and, when it was over, headed to a party in Venice Beach that I wasn’t invited to. Smith’s name got me in the door.

I found my way to a largely empty lounge area sponsored by Bank of America and “Politico 2020,” according to the pillows. A variety of people, some of whom definitely looked familiar from TV but whose names I didn’t know, drank wine and posed for a photographer in front of a white backdrop. I spotted one D.C. guy who holds political “salons” in his house with his wife and for a while was rumored to be shopping a reality show about it. I tried to picture the party with more cameras and the vaguely famous TV faces throwing wine at one another. It would still have had overwhelming sponsored-by-Bank of America vibes. But a Lis Smith show? “She’s just somebody who I’ve thought for years, like, *Huh, there’s going to come a story where Lis Smith is the protagonist, not the flack,*” Ben Smith said. Lis Smith is “never gonna have a conventional life,” her friend Melissa DeRosa, Cuomo’s top aide, said. “It’s just not who she is.”

Smith finally arrived and slipped into the crowd. Someone grabbed her a drink. At one point, a woman approached her. “I fucking love you,” she said and talked about how good she thought Buttigieg’s answer on China had been in the debate. After she moved on, I asked Smith how often stuff like that happens to her. “More than it used to,” she said, shrugging. ■

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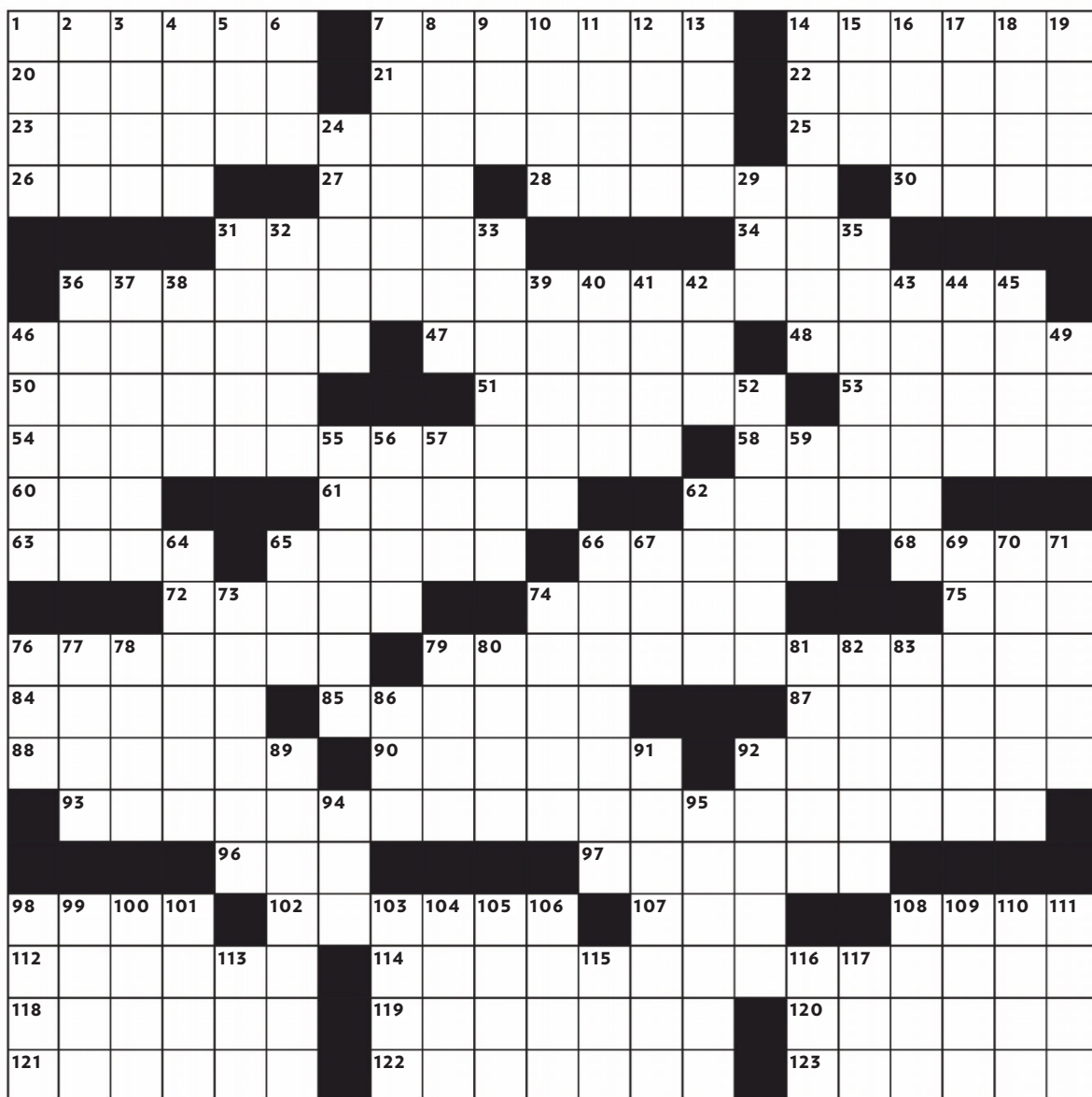


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If I May Add Something Here ...

New York Crossword by Matt Gaffney



Across

- 1 Biology-class organism
7 Peach and pear products
14 Annoyed utterance on "Seinfeld"
20 Venetian avenues
21 "Don't test me!"
22 Grinner on baseball caps
23 Starts listening to tunes online?
25 1979 movie with the line "Stay off the roads!"
26 "Se7en" sin
27 When doubled, a dangerous fly
28 Noise in a dusty room
30 River around Rikers Island
31 F equivalent
34 Sterile environments, briefly
36 Sexist's courtroom admission?
46 Collectibles since 1959
47 Was an agent for
48 Shade for taxis
50 For one item
51 "Oh, be serious!"
53 Cancel plans at the last minute
54 Treaty negotiators who will sign any agreement?

- 58 Insulted at a dinner
60 Coop occupant
61 Mercury and a small cluster of stars
62 Pitt's "Moneyball" role
63 Disk's ending
65 Shed ____ (cry)
66 Take a lot of courses
68 Work units
72 "Bolero" composer
74 In the ____ of (during)
75 Krieger of soccer
76 Musical series
79 Teach pundit Andrew a thing or two?
84 Bug on a brush
85 Knack
87 In a Subway, say
88 Gains access to
90 Arranged in great numbers
92 Has in mind
93 Be the same rationalizer you've always been?
96 ____ -Cat (brand of winter vehicle)
97 "Taken" man
98 Waxing body
102 Graf's guy
107 Acela stop (abbr.)
108 Conjure up

- 112 Turn upside down
114 Make categories like "Walkers on Stilts" and "Throwers of Pies"?
118 Billionaire recently in Iowa
119 Juicy book
120 "Little" herder
121 Swearing phrase
122 How a lullaby is sung
123 Avicii was born there

Down

- 1 Post-workout sensation
2 Primary
3 Showing
4 No problem
5 Non-halal order
6 Powdery residue
7 Rogue corporation
8 Penguin variety
9 Board hire
10 Arm art
11 Have ____ with (be connected to)
12 Overflowing (with)
13 Eyelid issue
14 Fierce motto
15 Its last letter stands for "Amendment"
16 Like most missed field goals

- 17 "The Starry Night" home, since '41
18 "I wish it were otherwise..."
19 In the on-deck circle
24 Public spirit
29 Cinematic Saldana
31 Mena or Jong
32 Mattress cover
33 One ready for the apocalypse
35 1988 and 1990 Wimbledon champ Edberg
36 Kotto of "Homicide: Life on the Street"
37 Agatha Christie title word
38 Lift from your phone
39 "... and ____ to keep it that way"
40 Assn. with barrels
41 Nose in the air?
42 Degrees for DAs
43 "Let me check on that"
44 Notting Hill home
45 Holder of oxen
46 Scrub in a tub
49 Join
52 1973 hit that's Spanish for "it is you"
55 Determiner of genius
56 Supply power to
57 Impeachment vote
59 Granola piece
62 One voice
64 Removes all trace of
65 Madison, e.g.
66 Quinceañera's age
67 Ice-cream magnate Joseph
69 Gully
70 Small organs
71 Works with numbers
73 Turns away
74 Capital of Belarus
76 Congratulatory shout
77 "Or" or "nor," say (abbr.)
78 Bishop with a Nobel Prize
79 Airline founded in 1948
80 Lucy's love
81 Slowly, to conductors
82 Spinoza wrote in it
83 Piece
86 Rival of Liz and Pete
89 Farrow ex
91 Harms, poetically
92 "My best guess is..."
94 Wet blanket?
95 Send airborne
98 Overlook
99 Not fooled by
100 It has a kitchen window
101 "Good Man" singer, 2018
103 Deeds
104 Multitude
105 Price-slashing extravaganza
106 Land in the water
108 Feel sorry for yourself
109 Not just impressed
110 One of four on a horse
111 Channel with highlight reels
113 TD caller
115 Filled a recliner
116 "Evil" network
117 Uncalled for



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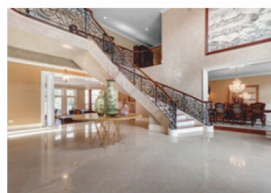


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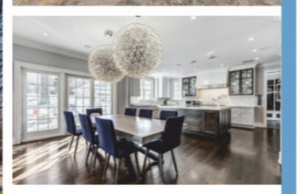
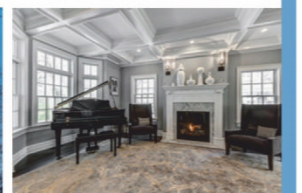
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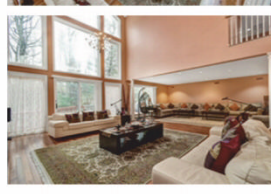
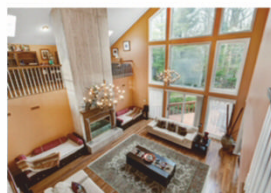
8 Mountain View Terrace, Maplewood. \$2,000,000.



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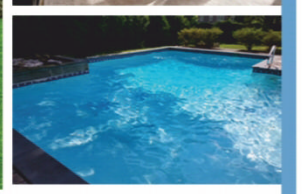
1 Lenape Road, Short Hills. \$1,699,000.



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6 | 5 | .46AC

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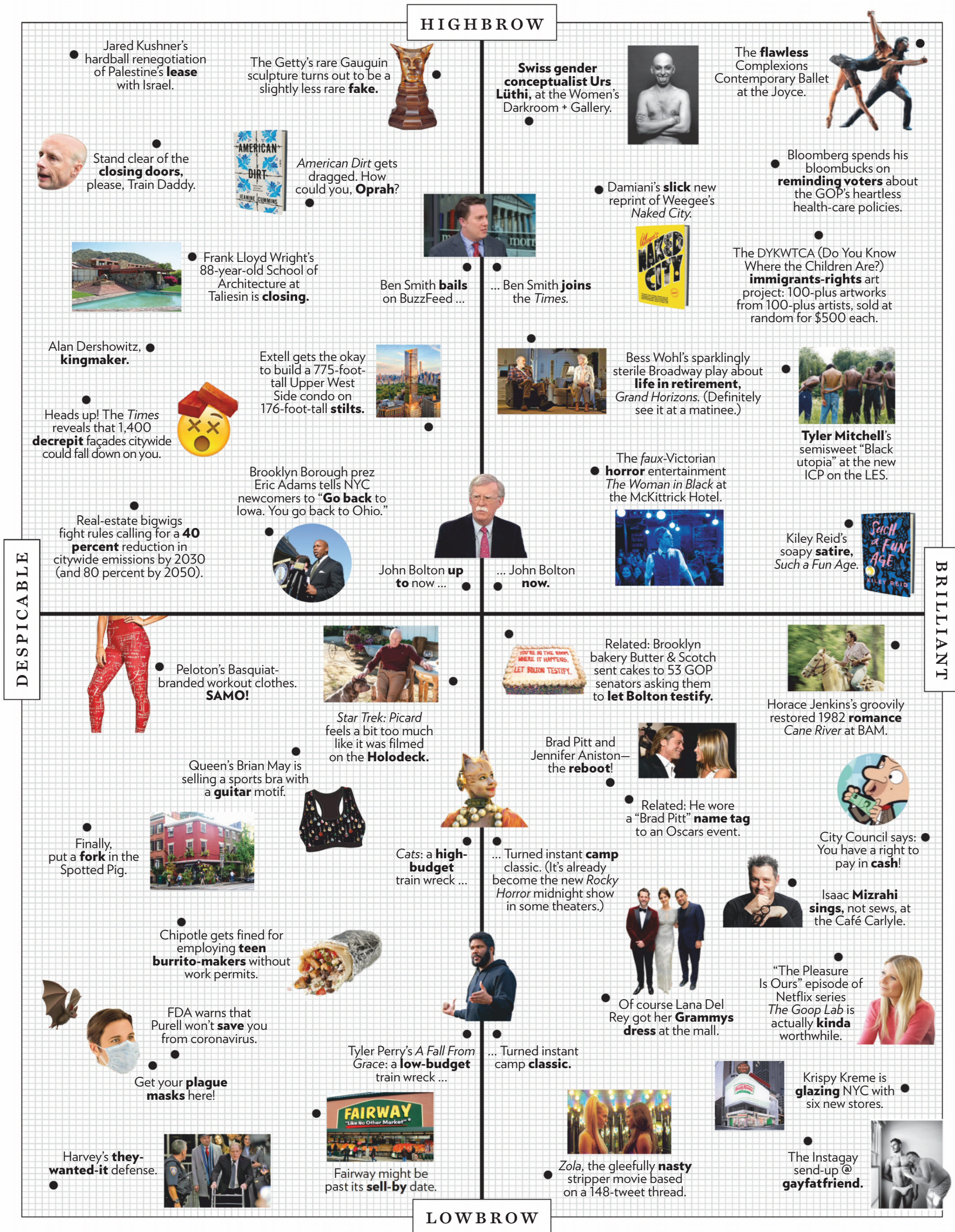
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