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How history ignores the bad refugees

Viet Thanh Nguyen
Contributing Writer

OPINION

I had forgotten that memory of my mother, sitting by herself, reading aloud from a church newsletter. It was the only way she could read, having had only a grade school education. As an American teenager fluent in English, I felt pity for her, and perhaps a bit of shame.

The memory came back to me on learning of the White House chief of staff John Kelly's words about undocumented immigrants coming from south of the border, whom he described as people who would not "easily assimilate into the United States, into our modern society."

"They're overwhelmingly rural people. In the countries they come from, fourth-, fifth-, sixth-grade educa-

tions are kind of the norm. They don't speak English," Mr. Kelly said. "They don't integrate well; they don't have skills. They're not bad people. They're coming here for a reason. And I sympathize with the reason. But the laws are the laws."

Mr. Kelly feels sympathy for these people, some of whom are like my mother, born into a rural background. But Mr. Kelly — like President Trump, who last week called certain undocumented immigrants "animals" — cannot empathize with them. His inability to see or feel the world as they do is shared by many Americans.

That includes some of my fellow Vietnamese-Americans, who, though they came to this country as refugees fleeing war, are saying that the United States should not take in any more refugees, especially those from places like Syria. Some, like the Vietnamese-American mayor of Westminster, Calif., home to the largest population of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam, even say the United States should not accept any undocumented immigrants, since they include "criminals."

We were the good refugees, the reasoning goes. These new ones are the bad refugees.

Having grown up in the Vietnamese refugee community in San Jose, Calif., in the 1970s and 1980s, I can testify that there were plenty of bad refugees among us. Welfare cheating. Insurance scams. Cash under the table. Gang violence, with home invasions being a Vietnamese specialty.

All that has been forgotten. Vietnamese-Americans are now part of the

NGUYEN, PAGE 11



Alanis Morissette, left, and the director Diane Pauls. "When you're dealing with an album that has such meaning for people, you have to respect that," Ms. Pauls said.

Ireland confronts its taboos

CARRIGTWOHILL, IRELAND

Vote on legalizing abortion splits nation that otherwise has opened up culturally

BY KIMIKO DE FREYTA-SAMURA

When it comes to the Roman Catholic Church, Judy Donnelly has been something of a rebel over the years. Like much of Ireland, she supported contraception, voted in a referendum to legalize divorce and, three years ago, backed same-sex marriage.

That last vote was joyously celebrated around the country and the world, placing Ireland, which elected its first gay prime minister last year, at the vanguard of what many called a social revolution.

But when it comes to the historic decision on legalizing abortion, which will be put to the nation on Friday, Ms. Donnelly says she will vote no, and enough of her countrymen and women, including lawmakers across the political divide, are expected to vote the same way that the result of the referendum has been thrown into doubt. Opinion polls ahead of the vote have narrowed so tightly in recent weeks that "yes" and "no" campaigners are not able to confidently predict a victory.

Ms. Donnelly, 46, who works in a pub in Carrigtwohill, found no contradiction in giving gay men and lesbians their marital rights, a triumphant affirmation of their social inclusion — Ireland decriminalized homosexuality only in 1993 — while denying what many say is a woman's right to decide what to do with her body.

"It's just not the same," she said, pausing as she struggled to articulate what exactly was the difference between the two. "It's about values and morals. It's just not the same," she repeated, before lapsing into silence.

The curious dynamic underscores the complex reality that even if Ireland is becoming more culturally liberal in many respects, opposition to abortion is deeply ingrained. The reasons are complicated and nuanced: a history of female oppression; the church's continuing grip over sexual education; a malaise over discussions about sex and sexual health; and very private experiences around miscarriages, fetal deformities, adoption difficulties and spousal disagreements over whether to keep a baby.

A big part of the problem, many Irish say, is that there is a legacy of sex being a taboo subject and that the negative consequences of sexual activity, including infections or unplanned pregnancies, are seen through a moral lens rather than as health issues. Even though 40 percent of children in the country are born to unmarried mothers and fathers (about the same as in the United States), many say there is still stigma around unmarried mothers.

It took a gay prime minister, Leo Varadkar, to call for this referendum. It will essentially ask voters whether they want to repeal a 1983 amendment to the Constitution that gives a fetus the same right to life as the mother and allow un-



CHARLES MCQUILLAN/GETTY IMAGES



CLODAGH KILCOYNE/REUTERS

A mural in Dublin supporting the "yes" vote, top, in Ireland's referendum on repealing the constitutional amendment that bans abortion. Opponents of the measure, above, at a rally. The Roman Catholic Church's grip over sexual education is a factor in the vote.

restricted terminations of pregnancies for up to 12 weeks.

"I know I come across as a hypocrite," said Darren Haddock, 48, a cabdriver who initially planned to vote in favor of abortion because he saw it as a woman's right. But now, he said, "we're talking about hurting a life."

The referendum on gay marriage was different, he said. "The time was right

for Ireland to come out of the Dark Ages, to break the shackles from the church, and it was a victory for people to stand up to it," he said.

Ms. Donnelly, who recently divorced, voted in favor of same-sex marriage because her sister-in-law was part of the first gay couple to get married in England. Another cousin is gay, and recently got married, too.

When it came to abortion, she reflected on some of her other relatives who had miscarriages, having wanted children badly. "And then you have people who cross over to England to get an abortion," she said.

There were some exceptions, she said, as in the cases of rape or incest, "but just because you made a boo-boo

IRELAND, PAGE 4

A firebrand in Iraq turns himself into a populist

BAGHDAD

Anticorruption stance of Moktada al-Sadr finds appeal across divides

BY MARGARET COKER

Iraqis are still haunted by memories of black-clad death squads roaming Baghdad neighborhoods a decade ago, cleansing them of Sunni Muslims as the country was convulsed by sectarian violence.

Many of the mass killings in the capital were done in the name of Moktada al-Sadr, a cleric best remembered by Americans for fiery sermons declaring it a holy duty among his Shiite faithful to attack United States forces.

The militia he led was armed with weapons supplied by Iran, and Mr. Sadr cultivated a strong alliance with leaders in Tehran, who were eager to supplant the American presence in Iraq and play the dominant role in shaping the country's future.

Now, the man once demonized by the United States as one of the greatest threats to peace in Iraq has come out as the surprise winner of this month's closely contested parliamentary elections, after a startling reinvention into a populist, anticorruption campaigner whose "Iraq First" message appealed to voters across sectarian divides.

The results have Washington and Tehran on edge, as officials in both countries seek to influence what is expected to be a complex and drawn-out battle behind the scenes to build a coalition government. Mr. Sadr's bloc won 54 seats — the most of any group, but still far short of a majority in Iraq's 329-seat Parliament.

Even before the final results were announced Saturday, Mr. Sadr — who did not run as a candidate and has ruled himself out as prime minister — had made clear whom he considers natural political allies. At the top of his list is Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, the moderate Shiite leader who has been America's partner in the fight against the Islamic State and whose political bloc finished third in the vote.

Pointedly absent from Mr. Sadr's list of potential partners: pro-Iranian blocs, as he has distanced himself from his former patrons in Iran, whose meddling he has come to see as a destabilizing force in Iraq's politics.

On Sunday, Mr. Abadi met with Mr. Sadr in Baghdad. They discussed forming a government, and aides from both sides said the men saw eye to eye on prioritizing the fight against corruption.

While Mr. Sadr has all the momentum going into negotiations over the governing coalition, there is no guarantee his bloc will be in power. And it is too early to tell what the election may mean for Iraqi stability or American national security

IRAQ, PAGE 4

Trailblazing '90s album brings jolt to a new arena

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

A new stage adaptation of 'Jagged Little Pill' stays true to original's rawness

BY JOSHUA BARONE

Everyone seems to have a story about hearing Alanis Morissette's "Jagged Little Pill" for the first time. The writer Diablo Cody was listening to the radio when a D.J. said, "This is going to be huge." The composer Tom Kitt was in college, feeling as if the whole world had stopped. I was a kid who got grounded for accidentally saying the F-word while singing along to "You Oughta Know."

The album's parade of fearlessly raw hits was as integral to '90s pop culture as AOL promo disks and Doc Martens. Its success vindicated Ms. Morissette,

who had previously been rejected by radio stations that said they didn't need another woman after Sinead O'Connor and Tori Amos. "For those in the patriarchy who thought women were not bankable," she recalled in a recent interview, "that went out the window."

Now Ms. Morissette's trailblazing 1995 album is taking on new life: as theater. And don't expect a fun, nostalgic jukebox musical about the '90s. "Jagged Little Pill," which opens at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass., on Thursday, is very much of the present and may just be the most woke musical since "Hair."

The show tackles hot-button issues like opiate addiction, gender identity and sexual assault, as well as more quietly urgent ones like transracial adoption, sexless marriage and image-consciousness. It also contains imagery from the Women's March and the #NeverAgain gun-control movement. Picture

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PAGE TWO

Executive bridged both sides of fashion

FULVIA VISCONTI FERRAGAMO
1950-2018

BY BONNIE WERTHEIM

By the time Fulvia Visconti Ferragamo was a teenager, there was a well-established precedent in her family: To be a daughter of Salvatore Ferragamo was to work for Salvatore Ferragamo.

It started with her oldest sister, Fiamma, who dropped out of high school at 16 to join her father's luxury business as a footwear designer. Then followed Giovanna, who at 15 took on the company's ready-to-wear clothing collections on top of her schoolwork.

When her turn came, at age 20, Fulvia gravitated toward accessories: the lively printed silk scarves and ties that would become part of the 91-year-old Italian fashion house's visual identity.

"We all found our own way of expressing our talents; we completed each other, like all sisters do," Mrs. Visconti Ferragamo told The New York Times Style Magazine in 2014. (At Ferragamo, she was always "Mrs. Fulvia.")

Her decades-long career bridged the creative and corporate management sides of Salvatore Ferragamo. She served as vice president and creative director of men's and women's silk accessories until she died in Milan on April 25 at 67.

The cause was cancer, family members said.

Fulvia Ferragamo was born in Florence on July 2, 1950, to Salvatore and Wanda Ferragamo. Her father had established himself as a leather shoemaker at the beginning of the 20th century — first in the United States, where he designed for Hollywood actors, then in Florence.



Like her sisters, Fulvia Visconti Ferragamo joined her father's luxury business.

"We all found our own way of expressing our talents; we completed each other, like all sisters do."

The company came on hard times during the Depression and filed for bankruptcy in 1933. But business boomed after World War II, as the family leather business expanded into a well-rounded luxury house, with a larger variety of shoes, women's clothing and other accessories.

Salvatore Ferragamo died in 1960, a year and a half after asking his eldest daughter, Fiamma, to join the company. Wanda Ferragamo took over the business and became the matriarch to three generations of Ferragamo women.

Mrs. Visconti Ferragamo joined the family business in 1970 as an accessories designer.

Her silk scarves, the first of which were created in 1974, bore naturalistic prints: tigers, elephants and lions cast against floral backgrounds. Her designs were an expression of her love of the outdoors; she raised horses and liked to sail.

In 1971 she married Giuseppe Visconti, a lawyer, in Fiesole, just outside Florence. The couple moved to Milan so Mrs. Visconti Ferragamo could focus on creating a new branch of the company there. On top of her organizational duties, she continued to oversee the design of scarves, costume jewelry and silk ties.

She is survived by her husband; their children, Angelica Visconti Ruspoli, Ginevra Visconti Bassetti, Maria Consolata Visconti di Modrone and Emanuele Visconti; her mother; and her siblings Ferruccio (the company chairman), Leonardo and Massimo Ferragamo and Giovanna Gentile Ferragamo. Her daughter Angelica joined the Ferragamo ranks as the brand's retail director. Fiamma Ferragamo died in 1998.

"Fulvia was my sister and a best friend, and she and I had a very strong bond and camaraderie," her brother Massimo, chairman of Ferragamo USA, said in an email. "We will never forget Fulvia because she not only brought color into our lives through the company and everything she did to create the accessory division, but she brought life and sparkle into our family and our lives with her incredible personality, charm and grace."

A lonely and perilous crusade

ROME

Journalists taking on the mafia live with death threats and police escorts

BY GAIA PIANIGIANI

For many of his days over the past four years, Paolo Borrometi has lived in isolation, though he is barely ever alone. He has not walked through a park or by the beach in his native Sicily for years. He cannot go to a restaurant freely or to a concert or the movies. He can't drive a car alone, go shopping alone or go out for dinner by himself.

Before heading to work as a reporter covering the mafia, he starts each morning with an espresso, a cigarette — and his police escort.

Angering the mafia as a journalist in Italy makes for a lonely life. And yet Mr. Borrometi, 35, is in good company. Almost 200 reporters in Italy live under police protection, making it unique among industrialized Western countries, advocacy groups say.

"None of us wants to be a hero or a model," Mr. Borrometi told an assembly of high school students on a recent morning in Rome, where he now lives. "We just want to do our job and our duty, to tell stories."

Yet murders connected to organized crime are rising in Italy, the authorities say, and international observers consider criminal networks the principal threat to journalists in Europe.

"Don't stop writing, Paolo," read an email Mr. Borrometi received two days after he was assaulted in 2014 outside his family's country home in Sicily by two men wearing balaclavas. "Our countries need free and investigative journalism. You have my respect."

The note came from Daphne Caruana Galizia, the Maltese investigative journalist who was killed in a car-bomb attack last year, after exposing her island nation's links to offshore tax havens and reporting on local politicians' crimes for decades. When she died at 53, she had 47 lawsuits pending against her, including one from the country's economy minister.

In addition to Ms. Caruana Galizia, who was killed in October, a 27-year-old reporter, Jan Kuciak, was killed along with his fiancée in Slovakia in February. He had also been investigating corruption with suspected ties to Italian mobsters.

"There have already been two journalists killed by the mafia inside the European Union, both investigating mafia stories and stories that domestic governments were not looking into," said Pauline Adès-Mével, who is responsible for the European desk at Reporters Without Borders, an advocacy group for press freedom.

"Italy is historically the country that has felt the mafia the most and has a dozen of journalists under 24-hour police protection," Ms. Adès-Mével said. "That doesn't happen in other countries."

Among those journalists is Lirio Abate, a mafia expert with the magazine L'Espresso, who has been under protection for 11 years, since the police thwarted a bomb attack in front of his house in Palermo. Federica Angeli, a reporter with La Repubblica, and her family have been under police escort for five years. And Roberto Saviano, the author of "Gomorra," a best-selling book, movie and TV series about the Neapolitan crime syndicate, has been under escort since 2006.



Paolo Borrometi, an Italian journalist, is watched by bodyguards in the building where he lives. Nearly 200 journalists in Italy live under police protection.

For Mr. Borrometi, it took just a year of reporting on the secret businesses and clandestine political ties of the mafia in southeastern Sicily for his independent news website, La Spia (The Spy), before criminals menaced him. In five years, he got hundreds of death threats from local mobsters.

Mr. Borrometi, who trained as a lawyer, started writing for local papers when he was 17, inspired by a Sicilian investigative reporter, Giovanni Spampinato, who was killed by the mafia in the 1970s.

He started his own website five years ago. His first investigation, on mafia infiltrations among top officials in the town of Scicli, contributed to the government's decision to dissolve city hall.

His articles pull no punches. They detail the connections between political powers and the mob, naming names, and accompanied by photographs. "People need to know who they are when they meet them at the bar," he said.

At first, his articles prompted vandalism against him and late night phone calls. But things got physical after he began writing stories that showed how Sicily's largest fruit and vegetable market was controlled by mobsters.

He was feeding his dog outside his country home, when two men jumped him, grabbed his right arm, and twisted it behind his back until his shoulder muscles tore in three places.

"The only words the attackers told me that day were, 'Mind your own business,' or 'This is only the first warning,' or a Sicilian, less polite, version of it," Mr. Borrometi recalled.

Almost five years later, he still can't move his shoulder properly.

That didn't stop him from continuing



Students at the Terezio Mamiani High School in Rome listening to journalists talk about the risks of reporting on the mafia in Italy.

to report on the mafia and taking a number of the mafiosi who threatened him to court. One night, after a fire attack almost burned down his apartment, the police decided to put him under full-time protection.

The mafia wasn't cowed. "We'll cut your head off, even inside a police station," the local mafia boss said in a public post on social media.

His reporting — and police investigations — have by now exposed a wider network of mafia affiliates who move produce from the fruit and vegetable market in Vittoria, Sicily, to the rest of Italy and to Europe, in affiliation with other criminal groups.

He found out that that one of the companies growing the famed Pachino tomato,

a special cherry tomato certified by Italy's Agriculture Ministry, was owned by the sons of two prominent mobsters. One of them had spent more than two decades in jail for mafia ties and was now working for his son's company.

The news spread, and the ministry took notice and cut the company off from the list of businesses that can sell Pachino tomatoes.

Last month, the mobsters decided to scale up their threats. The police say they intercepted a Sicilian mobster while he was discussing a plot with his sons to kill Mr. Borrometi with a car bomb. "We need a 'firework' like those in the 1990s, when one couldn't even walk on the streets," said the man, who was caught on a police wiretap. "A death

every once in a while is useful, so that all the whippersnappers calm down a little."

The reference was to the tense years when two Palermo prosecutors, Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, were brutally murdered alongside their bodyguards, and car bombs exploded around Italy, killing bystanders and damaging historic buildings.

In the wiretapped conversation, the man was advocating for a return to that bloody time of overt intimidation of authorities and citizens alike. There hasn't been a mafia car bomb in Italy since.

"This shows how much investigative journalism angers the mafia, which thrives with its business in silence," Nino Di Matteo — a prominent mafia prosecutor, hence also a prime target — said on national television a few days after the police arrested those said to be planning the attack against Mr. Borrometi.

"Journalism has a fundamental role in the fight against the mafia, especially in a moment like this," said Mr. Di Matteo, who also travels with bodyguards. "I believe we are underestimating a bit of the danger that the mafia represents to the country and to our democracy."

Mr. Borrometi is thankful the police intervened. "I owe my life to my state, to those policemen and magistrates," Mr. Borrometi said during an interview at his home this month.

And he owes his life to the men who protect him constantly, though once the armored door closes on his apartment in Rome's city center, he is alone.

"I am without my family and my loved ones," he said smiling, surrounded by framed anti-mafia recognitions. "But I have my wonderful job."

Trailblazing album as raw today as in '90s

JAGGED, FROM PAGE 1

a pageant of liberalism, with your favorite '90s songs as the soundtrack.

"Alanis's songs were written 23 years ago," said Mr. Kitt, the production's music supervisor and the composer of the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical "Next to Normal." "But they feel like they were written yesterday. These are all human issues that we've been dealing with for years."

To pull off what may risk coming off as heavy-handed, American Repertory has assembled a team of A-list collaborators in addition to Mr. Kitt and Ms. Morissette: the Tony Award-winning Diane Paulus, the company's artistic director; the choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui; and Ms. Cody, the screenwriter of "Juno" fame, who wrote the book. (The unsung hero, they all said, is Lily, a French bulldog puppy that has become the production's de facto therapy dog.)

"When you're dealing with an album that has such meaning for people, you have to respect that," Ms. Paulus said. "We know people are going to expect some sonic universe and emotion. But if we do our job right, people are going to think: I've never heard these songs like this."

The songs, which also include Morissette tracks outside "Jagged Little Pill," are convincingly theatrical in the context of the musical, which may be a surprise, considering the material comes from two outsiders; Ms. Cody didn't even take an academic stab at dramatic writing while growing up, she said.

"I don't think I ever had the confidence in my younger years to say I could



Rehearsing "Jagged Little Pill" at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass. The show tackles issues like opiate addiction, gender identity and sexual assault.

tell a story on the stage," she said. "I was never an assured creator. I didn't think I had anything to contribute."

But Ms. Cody's book for "Jagged Little Pill" — which strips away the picture-perfect veneer of a Connecticut family over the course of a year — is unapologetically on brand: by turns biting, satirical, touching and frank. In fact, it may even be a more honest reflection of her writerly mind than we typically get on-screen.

"I come from a world of parent companies and advertisers and suits and caution," she said. "If I want to express a belief of my own, I'm asked to temper it

so that we don't alienate anyone. This is the opposite."

If there is anything keeping Ms. Cody's book in check, it's the music itself. But part of her task has been to twist the poetic ambiguity of Ms. Morissette's lyrics in the service of an original story. That means framing "Mary Jane" as a husband's whisper over his wife's hospital bed, or "One Hand in My Pocket" as musical theater's prototypical "I want" song.

But sometimes the production leaves Ms. Morissette's cherished music alone: The staging for "You Oughta Know," sung by the scene-stealing Lauren Pat-

ten, is so spare it could just as easily be an intimate concert. (At the performance I attended earlier this month, Ms. Patten's "You Oughta Know" stopped the show with a minutes-long standing ovation. I was told that this has been happening every night since previews began on May 5.)

"Ironic" is sung in the context of a high school writing workshop and the scene makes a joke from the elephant in the room: decades of pedants nit-picking about the song's misuse of the word "ironic."

"I'm probably laughing the hardest in the audience," Ms. Morissette said, adding that when she worked on the song with the songwriter and producer Glen Ballard, "we didn't give a [expletive] about the malapropism."

She also didn't think many people would even hear it. But once "Ironic" became a hit, there were entire website forums dedicated to shaming the song and — in true internet fashion — thinking of ways to murder Ms. Morissette.

"I naively thought fame would be me kumbaya-ing with Johnny Depp lying on my lap at a campfire and Sharon Stone offering me a drink," she said. "It was the complete opposite, totally isolating. I just stopped reading any comments."

The vibe behind the scenes of the musical is, like its material, inclusive and socially aware. Early in the rehearsal process, Ms. Paulus asked everyone in the cast to give a presentation on a topic from the show. Celia Gooding (the daughter of the current Tony nominee LaChanze) — who plays the queer, protest sign-toting daughter Frankie —

spoke about colorism, a form of discrimination based on skin color that transcends race. And Elizabeth Stanley ("On the Town"), who plays her mother, chose to research transracial adoption.

"Everyone shared really vulnerable personal stories," Ms. Stanley said. "It forced us as a company to be gentle with each other."

Members of the cast and crew have also been one another's shoulder to lean on amid what Ms. Paulus called "the last two years of major trauma in America," which shaped "Jagged Little Pill" throughout development. Some material has even gone from headlines to the stage, like a sobering moment in "All I Really Want" when the song stops — leaving the audience with the tableau of Frankie holding up a #NeverAgain against a backdrop of images from the Parkland student protests.

Ms. Paulus's inspiration for moments like this is "Hair," which she directed for Shakespeare in the Park, and later Broadway, nearly a decade ago.

"They were reflecting in real time what was happening in the world," she said of that show's original production, in 1967. "Guys were getting their draft cards delivered to the stage door; it was that real."

With that in mind, the version of "Jagged Little Pill" I saw could change tomorrow. It could even be a different show if it were staged on Broadway, as many of Ms. Paulus's American Repertory productions are.

"I feel like theater is all about the present," Ms. Paulus said. "When and if we get another shot at this in the future, I'm sure things will change."

World

Polio case buoys Pakistan's eradication fight

DUKKI, PAKISTAN

Single diagnosis is a low for nation, but victory has not been declared yet

BY MEHER AHMAD

Outside her small, mud-walled house in western Pakistan, Gul Saima is cajoling her 3-year-old son to take a few steps. He cries as he struggles to lift his right leg and arm, both stiff and unyielding.

Overhead is a banner featuring a photo of a smiling boy on crutches. Ms. Saima, 38, is illiterate and cannot read the words printed in Urdu: "Don't let your child's dreams go to waste." But the connection between the smiling boy and her son, Sayyad Karam, is painfully clear: Both have the paralysis that often follows a polio infection.

The health authorities hung the banners throughout the area for a polio awareness campaign, and apparently put one on Ms. Saima's house in a clumsy attempt to show officials, many of whom have visited since Sayyad was diagnosed with polio last month — that they are committed to it.

Sayyad's diagnosis was a significant event, and not only for his family. So far, his is the only new polio case of the year in Pakistan — a historic low, according to official figures in a country where eradication efforts have been repeatedly foiled by ignorance, mistrust and militants' attacks on vaccination teams.

Pakistan has come agonizingly close to declaring victory over polio. Each of the last three years, nongovernmental organizations involved in fighting it have optimistically declared it the virus's final year, seeking support from international donors and local officials as they embark on the daunting task of vaccinating every child 5 and under in the country.

But polio has persisted in the nation and in neighboring Afghanistan, where increasing instability has left both countries at risk, the finish line just beyond reach.

Sayyad's diagnosis prompted an emergency vaccination campaign in



Gul Saima helping her 3-year-old son, Sayyad Karam, outside their home in Dukki, Pakistan. He was diagnosed with polio, the country's only new case this year. His result prompted an emergency vaccination campaign in the town.

Dukki, the small coal-mining town in Pakistan's western province of Baluchistan where the family lives.

About 35 miles from Ms. Saima's home, Saif ur-Rehman, the commissioner of Loralai, the district that includes Dukki, is checking in with some of the vaccination teams after the emergency campaign's first day. The teams report their results to Mr. Rehman, and he responds with strident calls for greater efforts.

"This is a scar on our community," he tells them, adding that if polio were to

appear "anywhere else in the world, I don't care. But this is our town, our community. It's here and it's here now."

He makes a pointed comparison with India, Pakistan's neighbor and main rival, which eradicated polio in 2014. The meeting goes late into the evening, even though almost everyone has been up since dawn, preparing and deploying the vaccination teams that go door to door under police escort.

After the meeting, Mr. Rehman explains his urgency. "We don't hide anything," he said. "The worst thing you can

do in this scenario is try to paint a rosy picture."

He is all too aware of the vulnerability of Baluchistan, Pakistan's biggest province: It consistently ranks last in the country on progress markers like literacy, infant mortality and terrorism. Of the eight new polio cases in Pakistan last year, three were in Baluchistan.

"We know the issues we're facing," Mr. Rehman said. "It just presents an opportunity for us to get stronger."

His positivity reflects a new optimism about the polio eradication campaign af-

ter years of painful setbacks. In 2014, 306 new cases were reported, the most in 15 years and more than three times as many as the year before.

And since 2012, militants have killed more than 70 anti-polio workers and the police officers protecting them, attacks that began after the Pakistani Taliban accused vaccinators of being foreign spies.

The situation worsened after the United States was found to have recruited a Pakistani doctor to help find

Polio has persisted in the nation and in neighboring Afghanistan, where increasing instability has left both countries at risk, the finish line just beyond reach.

Osama bin Laden under the guise of carrying out a vaccination campaign.

"Back then, everyone felt like their efforts were in vain," said Dr. Rana Safdar, the national coordinator of the Emergency Operation Center for Polio Eradication. "If things kept going the same way, we knew we were going to get the same results."

Since 2015, Dr. Safdar has overseen virtually every aspect of Pakistan's battle against polio. In his office in Islamabad, the capital, he sits among a war room's assortment of maps and weekly reports from across the country. Local bureaucracies, the World Health Organization, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Unicef — all report to and coordinate with Dr. Safdar's office under a federal program similar to India's.

"People needed to have some trust in the federal government to reach a solution," he said.

But given the rampant corruption and sometimes deadly political rivalries within that government, trust is hard to come by. And many of the impoverished families that vaccinators seek out have never met a representative of the state.

Their suspicion is compounded by rumors that the polio vaccine causes impotence, death and, oddly, paralysis. Refusals are common, and some families will hide their children from vaccinators, or even attack them.

"They've chased us with sticks before, even," said Saida Baloch, a cheerful 27-year-old leading an emergency vaccination team on its rounds in Dukki.

Ms. Baloch, who has worked as a vaccinator in Dukki since 2014, is well aware of the risks she and her team face. Attacks have been rare the past two years, but in January a mother-daughter vaccination team was shot and killed in Quetta, about 100 miles west of Dukki.

Despite the deaths, much of Pakistan's recent success in battling polio can be attributed to the country's improving security. Michel Zaffran, the director of polio eradication for the World Health Organization, said a bigger threat lies across the border in hard-to-reach places in Afghanistan.

"As long as we have the virus on either side of the border, we have a risk," he said. "It's a sneaky virus. It continues to hide in pockets where the vaccine isn't reaching it."

Of Afghanistan's 13 cases last year, six were in Kandahar Province, just across the border with Baluchistan. (Nigeria, the only other country where the virus remains endemic, has not seen a new case in two years.)

Pakistan now has 55 monitoring sites where teams test water and sewage streams for polio, more than in any other country battling the virus. Until the samples are negative, it means the virus continues to circulate even if it has not paralyzed anyone. Currently, only two cities are testing positive for environmental polio: Peshawar in the north and Karachi in the south, which both serve as transit hubs.

The health authorities say the virus is now "ping-ponging" in Baluchistan. The strain found in Dukki came from a city just north of it, and that strain in turn was traced to Karachi, where the virus has been present for over a decade. As long as carriers keep circulating the virus, children who go unvaccinated or miss a dose are at risk of contracting polio.

That is part of the reason that the final years of eradication efforts can prove the hardest, said Mr. Zaffran of the World Health Organization.

"We're not out of the woods yet," he said. "It's not that we're close, it's that we're closer than we've ever been."

Taiwan clings to dot in the sea

ITU ABA, SOUTH CHINA SEA

International ruling demotes designation from 'island' to 'rock'

BY STEVEN LEE MYERS

The largest natural feature of the Spratly Islands, a hotly disputed archipelago in the South China Sea, is a forested, sun-drenched oval of land, cleaved by a single runway that gives the place the appearance of a raw coffee bean floating in bright blue water.

Called Itu ABA, it is occupied not by China, which has aggressively asserted its territorial claims in the sea, but by its archrival, the self-governing democracy of Taiwan.

The two broadly agree that there is a historical Chinese stake in the South China Sea, but they diverge radically over how to exercise stewardship over it.

China has built artificial islands out of the reefs and shoals it controls and, according to analysts poring over satellite photographs, armed them with radars and missiles.

Taiwan, by contrast, is soliciting competitive bids from companies to rebuild its small hospital here, bolstering sorely needed search and rescue facilities in the event of maritime disaster in the heavily trafficked sea.

This "should become a center for humanitarian aid," the director general of Taiwan's Coast Guard, Lee Chung-wei, explained during a recent visit to Itu ABA, a mere 110 acres in size.

He was there, accompanied by other officials and a few journalists, to observe a training exercise involving a simulated collision of ships.

"In the case of a real collision, the disaster could be huge and would require a huge amount of medical energy to solve the problem," Mr. Lee told reporters, "so we are trying to upgrade our capability as much as possible."

In Chinese, Itu ABA is known as Taiping, which means peaceful or tranquil and happened to be the name of the warship that landed the first Chinese government official here in 1946.

Taiwanese sovereignty over the place, which is also claimed by the Philippines and Vietnam, is a matter of national pride. That pride, though, suffered a blow two years ago from which it is still struggling to recover.

An international arbitration panel effectively rebuffed Taiwan's meticulously crafted argument that this was, in fact, an island under definitions set by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The panel, adjudicating a claim brought by the Philippines against China's claims, declared it a "rock" instead,

meaning it cannot sustain human habitation or economic activity. The demotion from being an "island" means that Taiwan can no longer claim exclusive economic control over a wide swath of waters around Itu ABA.

It is, to be sure, a nice "rock."

On either side of the runway, which was built in 2007 and expanded in 2012, dense growths include banana and coconut trees. Signs along the pathways warn of falling coconuts. The place is teeming with sea birds, and is a nesting ground for green sea turtles.

China's man-made islands in the Spratly Islands, by contrast, are so new they lack significant vegetation.

Itu ABA has four freshwater wells — part of its claim to "island-ness" — that provide water and nourish small plots that grow vegetables to feed the contingent of 150 to 200 people who live here, most of them from the Coast Guard.



Itu ABA in the South China Sea, occupied by Taiwan. It is part of the Spratly Islands, claimed by China and others.

"If Taiping Island is not deemed an island for the purposes of international law, then nothing down there is," said Margaret K. Lewis, an American professor of law at Seton Hall University who is a senior Fulbright scholar in Taiwan. "It has the strongest claim to inhabit human life."

The Spratly Islands, named after a British whaling captain who recorded them in 1843, comprise more than 100 "islands," coral reefs and shoals that had no indigenous populations. They lie amid strategically important fisheries and shipping lanes — and, possibly, reserves of oil and natural gas.

They are claimed in their entirety by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, and in part by the Philippines, Malaysia and, most recently, Brunei.

The excursion to Itu ABA — a three-hour 20-minute flight from the southern tip of Taiwan — was intended to showcase Taiwanese gentle sovereignty.

Taiwan's role as a player in the disputes over the South China Sea has been largely overshadowed by China. And Taiwan's status seems precarious, if not yet directly threatened, despite maintaining its hold for more than seven decades on what was the largest above-water feature before China began its is-

land-building spree in 2013.

The same arbitration case that found Itu ABA to be a mere rock also rejected China's claims in the Spratly Islands, but China simply declared the arbitration panel's ruling moot. So did Taiwan, undercutting its own position that it seeks a peaceful resolution of the territorial disputes and a code of conduct that would govern activity in the waters.

"Taiwan has remained a marginal player in the dispute," said Lynn Kuok of the International Institute for Strategic Studies-Asia in Singapore, who has written on Taiwan's policy in the South China Sea. "It has been unsuccessful in its attempts to be included in multilateral mechanisms aimed at managing or resolving disputes, such as the ongoing code of conduct negotiations."

China makes every effort it can to weaken Taiwan's voice in international affairs generally, arguing that it is part of Chinese territory, though the Communist government in Beijing has never occupied the island.

The claims to the Spratlys predate the civil war that ended with the Communist Party's triumph and the retreat of the Nationalist forces of the Republic of China to Taiwan in 1949. That, counter-intuitively, bolsters China's claims today.

The "nine-dash line" that China today uses to mark its territory was first on maps drafted in the 1940s by the Nationalist government, led by Chiang Kai-shek.

Despite claims of ancient historical links, Chinese officials in the first half of the 20th century were barely aware of the shoals and cays that make up the Spratlys until France annexed six of them, including Itu ABA, according to Bill Hayton, the author of "The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia."

The Japanese seized them from the French in 1938, but then surrendered them after losing World War II. Concrete piers extending off a white-sand beach — the ruins of a submarine pier — are a relic of Japan's brief rule.

Two Chinese warships — one called the Taiping — visited Itu ABA in 1946, staking a claim that the Nationalist government held even after fleeing to Taiwan. The Nationalists did not regularly occupy the place until 1956. Beijing's presence in the Spratly islands came much later.

China, which has steadily built up its military presence in the South China Sea, on Friday announced that it had for the first time landed bombers on another of its territories, Woody Island in the Paracels to the north, prompting a new rebuke from the Pentagon.

Chen Yu-hsing, a senior executive officer with Taiwan's newly created Ocean Affairs Council, described a different vision for the waters during the visit to Itu ABA. "We want this to be a peaceful place," he said.

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WORLD

A firebrand in Iraq turns into a populist

IRAQ, FROM PAGE 1
goals. But the upset has clearly weakened the sectarian foundation of Iraq's political system and helped transform Mr. Sadr's image from the paragon of a militant Shiite into an unexpected symbol of reform and Iraqi nationalism.

As the head of the Sairoon Alliance for Reform, Mr. Sadr presides over an unlikely alliance that pairs his pious, largely working-class Shiite base with Sunni business leaders, liberals and Iraqis looking for relief from the country's long-simmering economic crisis.

For those joining the alliance, it was important to be convinced that Mr. Sadr's shift from Shiite firebrand to Iraqi patriot was sincere and likely to last.

Late last year, Mr. Sadr began reaching out to groups outside his base with an offer to form a political movement, and the country's embattled leftists and secularists — once his staunch enemies — faced a moment of reckoning.

They remembered how a rogue Shariah court he had established passed sentences on fellow Shiites deemed too submissive toward the American occupation of Iraq. And they recalled the countless Iraqis killed in battles between the country's security forces and Mr. Sadr's militia.

But a ragtag group of communists, social democrats and anarchists have come to embrace Mr. Sadr as a symbol of the reform they have championed for years — an image that the cleric has burnished, seeing it as the best path to political power.

"Let me be honest: We had a lot of apprehensions, a lot of suspicions," said Raad Fahmi, a leader of Iraq's Communist Party, which is part of Mr. Sadr's alliance. "But actions speak louder than words. He's not the same Moktada al-Sadr."

ISIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

The change in Mr. Sadr was prompted by the political and security crisis set off by the Islamic State's takeover of large parts of northern and western Iraq in 2014, according to Sheikh Saleh al-Obeidi, Mr. Sadr's spokesman. The ensuing violence led to an overwhelming shift in the public mood: a feeling that sectarianism was at the root of much of the country's suffering.

Mr. Sadr, the scion of an eminent clerical family, has portrayed his changed political philosophy in starkly pragmatic terms.

In his only extensive interview before the elections, given to his own television channel, Mr. Sadr put forth a manifesto largely adopted from his new secularist allies. He said his goals were to put professionals — not partisan loyalists — into positions of power as a way to build national institutions that serve the people instead of political insiders.

"We have tried the Islamists and they failed terribly," Mr. Sadr said, a rebuke that his aides said included his own movement. "So let us try another way in which the independent technocrat or independent Islamist or secular technocrat, whoever is best for the job, takes over a ministry and makes it productive. We should try that."

Whether Mr. Sadr can succeed with his reform agenda is an open question, said Joost Hiltermann, the director of the International Crisis Group's Middle East program, as building a majority coalition will mean partnering with some of the established faces that voters expressed dissatisfaction with at the polls. Those other politicians "have much to lose from an effort to curb corruption," Mr. Hiltermann said.



IVOR PRICKETT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



ALAA AL-MARIANI/REUTERS



SAURABH DAS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Clockwise from top: Supporters of the Sairoon Alliance for Reform, led by the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr, at a rally before the election in which the bloc came out as the surprise winner; thousands of Mr. Sadr's supporters marched in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, in 2003, demanding that American forces leave; Mr. Sadr on his way to vote in Najaf this month.

In addition to this new domestic philosophy, Mr. Sadr, 45, has honed an "Iraq First" foreign policy.

He has expanded his once singular anti-American focus to include diatribes against Iran. He also has built bridges with close American allies in the Arab world, like Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia.

The Mr. Sadr of today, his aides say, is remarkably different from the one President George W. Bush called America's greatest enemy in Iraq, on a par with Al Qaeda.

Diplomats from several Western countries, including ones whose coal-

ition troops were killed by Mr. Sadr's militia, have met with him and say they are looking for ways to work with the newly influential leader. They are ready to draw the curtain on past events, they said, in hopes of finding common ground over containing Iran's influence in Iraq.

But many Iraqis are not convinced his that new stance is here to stay.

Among them are several senior commanders in the Iraqi security forces who are trying to build a centralized chain of command at the expense of sectarian militias. Those militias have enhanced their standing because of their role in helping defeat the Islamic State, but

continue to have a reputation for lawlessness.

In the week since the election, several senior political rivals of Sairoon have privately criticized Mr. Sadr, citing his militia's long record of violence. None would speak publicly, however, given the delicate political jockeying underway to build a coalition government.

The broader Sunni population remains wary of Mr. Sadr. But many Sunnis did give their vote to the bloc of Mr. Abadi, the prime minister, so a governing coalition that includes both sides would represent a significant bridging of the country's sectarian divide.

SHIFTING ROLES

The first time many Iraqis heard the name Moktada al-Sadr was soon after the Americans seized control of Baghdad in 2003. In the post-occupation chaos, Mr. Sadr emerged as a type of Robin Hood, deploying his recently formed militia to distribute food to the poor and defend Shiites against what many came to view as acts of American aggression.

Amid this ferment, a leading Iraqi cleric, Abdel Majid al-Khoi, was killed in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, shocking millions of followers. Many Shiite clerics believed Mr. Sadr had ordered the killing to settle an old family feud.

Over time, respect for Mr. Sadr's militia among many Iraqis turned to revulsion. Units became known for Mafia-style protection rackets, kidnappings and extortion, even in Shiite neighborhoods. A growing backlash prompted Mr. Sadr to leave for Iran in 2007.

In 2008, while Mr. Sadr was still in Iran, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki took decisive action. He ordered the Iraqi army to Basra to stem militia violence there. An intense urban battle killed 215 militia members and wounded 600. The blow sidelined Mr. Sadr for a time. He ordered his militia into hibernation, but never had his men disarm.

By 2012, Mr. Sadr, who had returned from Iran, had regained enough influence to spearhead a vote of no-confidence against Mr. Maliki, a maneuver that spun Iraq into a new crisis.

ODD BEDFELLOWS

Then in 2014, another national crisis erupted: a security collapse as the Islamic State took over one-third of the country.

Mr. Sadr called his militia back to the front lines, but this time as a partner of the diverse Iraqi security forces and the American-led coalition fighting the extremists. He also turned his attention to a small protest movement organized by leftists and secularists in the capital. The demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Baghdad were on behalf of civil servants and pensioners, and against growing economic inequality and the lack of essentials like electricity and health care.

The protesters were mostly ignored by Iraq's political establishment, but Mr. Sadr viewed their demands as an echo of the plaintive calls of his own base for better jobs and government services. So

"Let me be honest: We had a lot of apprehensions, a lot of suspicions. But actions speak louder than words. He's not the same Moktada al-Sadr."

he looked to build relationships with these groups, despite their diametrically different worldviews.

Mr. Sadr's closest aide, Dhia'a Assadi, called the overtures sincere. "His eminence has always been a voice for the poor," Mr. Assadi said. "He saw that it was to the benefit for all Iraqis for those who share principles to come together."

For the past two years, supporters of Mr. Sadr have banded together with communists, intellectuals and community activists in protest rallies, efforts that have built mutual respect. Last fall, the Communist Party leadership visited Mr. Sadr at his headquarters in Najaf, the home of Iraq's clerical establishment.

Mr. Fahmi, one of the Communist leaders, said several of his comrades were initially cool to the idea of joining forces with someone perceived to have so much blood on his hands.

In the end, most members accepted that if radical political change was going to work in Iraq, it needed a popular leader to bring the masses on board.

"So what if Moktada al-Sadr is now the face of reform?" Mr. Fahmi said. "What should I care as long as the reforms happen? He's a man who can motivate millions."

"If our society improves because of him," he added, "I'll be the first one to congratulate him."

Falih Hassan contributed reporting.

With abortion vote, Ireland confronts its taboos

IRELAND, FROM PAGE 1
doesn't mean you get an abortion."

Still, she voted in three previous referendums allowing women to have abortions if their lives were in danger, to travel abroad for the procedure and to have access to information about it. The legalization of abortion, she said, would "make it easier for people to say, 'Oh, I'll just go and rid of it.'"

For Una Mullally, who edited the book "Repeal the 8th," a reference to the Eighth Amendment that essentially bans abortion in Ireland, the answer to the dichotomy over gay and women's rights is control.

"Misogyny is much more embedded in Irish life than homophobia," she said. "Ireland has a terrible history of oppressing women, and the legacy of the Catholic Church is control," she added, referring to the thousands of unmarried women who became pregnant and were placed into servitude or mental asylums since the 18th century until as recently as the mid-1990s.

Even when the country in 1985 legalized condoms to be sold without prescription, Ms. Mullally said, it was to deal with the AIDS epidemic, rather than to give women their reproductive rights. "Women's autonomy has always been viewed with suspicion or through a lens that is very bizarre," she said.

In Cork, Ireland's second-biggest city, placards for opposing campaigns were attached to almost every street lamp, but the mood was subdued. Most people interviewed for this article didn't want their names published; many of them hadn't spoken about the subject even with friends, let alone their families.

"Oh God, no," exclaimed a 24-year-old barista named Maedhbh who wore a nose ring and a bright yellow sweatshirt



Judy Donnelly, left, a bartender in Carrigtwohill, Ireland, is opposed to an easing of abortion law. Right, the offices in Cork of an organization that backs access to the procedure.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELENA HERMOSA SANTOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

with the words "Bitter Lemon" on it.

"My grandparents don't want to engage in it," she said, just as her grandfather Paddy walked in to the coffee shop. When asked about the referendum, he stopped in his tracks and pretended to be hard of hearing.

"You could be shot for giving an answer," a customer standing nearby said, smirking, before rushing out the door. "There's a saying in Irish: 'Whatever you say, say nothing.'"

While the church's influence has fallen drastically in most spheres of Irish life, its hold on sexual education remains strong — the institution still controls most schools in the country.

Even internet-savvy Irish in their early 20s spoke about receiving more of

a lesson in biology, and a cursory one at that, than instructions about sexual health and safety.

"When we were 16 we had two lads, monks, come in to talk about abstinence, and that one in 10 people get pregnant and that you can still get STDs from wearing condoms," said Ben Collins, a 22-year-old college student who plans to vote to legalize abortion. "It was basically fear. The Catholic influence is so big here, but you don't even realize it."

Deirdre Allinen, 32, recalled sitting in a classroom and having nuns wheel in a television before being shown a grisly video about abortion.

"Then we'd say the rosary and stand around praying," she said. "The way it's taught to us, it's still in me. The curricu-

lum is still hidden in our brains. It took me a long time to shake it off."

As a result, Ireland has never had a conversation about sex being a positive thing, said Will St Leger, an artist and an H.I.V. activist who is on a crusade to reform sex education in schools.

"A lot of these issues around sexual health and reproductive rights all stem from a lack of information and shame," he said. "That's the biggest element — what we do with our bodies and with other people carries shame."

"We see ourselves as global, checking in at airports, L.G.B.T., Eurovision," Mr. St Leger said, and Ireland as a mecca for tech giants like Google, Facebook and Apple. "But this crushing theocratic doctrine put on Irish society has perme-

ated right to the core," he added, "even to the person who doesn't go to church: that sex is seen as a sin. It's in our DNA."

The dearth of a proper national conversation is part of the reason Ireland is seeing a surge in sexually transmitted diseases, Mr. St Leger said, with 15- to 24-year-olds, for example, making up half of Ireland's number of reported annual chlamydia infections.

The nation is also in the throes of an H.I.V. crisis, he added, pointing to opinion polls that show one-quarter of respondents are not properly informed about the virus. At least a quarter of respondents still believe they can catch it by kissing or sitting on a toilet seat. And for all the excitement around the vote on same-sex marriage, Mr. St Leger

pointed out, the government has since 2009 cut the budget in half for the Gay Men's Health Service, which provides H.I.V. testing, screenings and treatments for sexually-transmitted infections, and outreach.

The same-sex marriage vote was "all about love and relationships," he said. "But we don't talk about sexual health."

Still, sexual education has improved from Ms. Donnelly's time, when nuns taught her class: "If a lad sat on your lap, you'd put a newspaper on your lap. That was the contraception of the day."

In recent years, Ireland has seen some of the biggest turnarounds in public opinion in the Western world. In 1992, for example, when homosexuality was still a crime in the country, participants in a gay pride parade in Cork wore masks so as not to embarrass relatives.

In 2018, Ireland has a gay prime minister, same-sex marriage is allowed and some of the world's most progressive bills concerning lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are being put forward in Parliament.

Similarly, attitudes toward abortion shifted drastically after Savita Halappanavar died in 2012 of complications from a septic miscarriage. She had asked for a termination, but the hospital refused her request, initially judging that her life was not in danger. The baby was stillborn, and Ms. Halappanavar died a few days later.

For many Irish voters, the referendum over abortion is, ultimately, a deeply private choice.

In 2015, after the same-sex marriage vote, "it was like Glastonbury; it was party central," recalled Mr. Haddock, the cabdriver. But after the vote, he said, "no matter who wins or loses, there's not going to be a party."

After shootings, a march to the ballot box

WASHINGTON

More young people are registering to vote in several key U.S. states

BY MICHAEL TACKETT AND RACHEL SHOREY

The pace of new-voter registrations among young Americans in crucial states is accelerating, a signal that school shootings in the United States this year — and the anger and political organizing in their wake — may prove to be more than ephemeral displays of activism.

They could even help shape the outcome of the midterm elections in November. If voters in their teens and 20s vote in greater numbers than usual, as many promised during nationwide marches for gun control this spring, the groundswell could affect close races in key states like Arizona and Florida, where there will be competitive races for governor, the Senate and a number of House districts.

The deadly shooting on Friday at Santa Fe High School in Texas will probably add urgency to the efforts. Hours after the carnage, young organizers mobilized by the February mass shooting in Parkland, Fla., were vowing a political response.

"Santa Fe High, you didn't deserve this," Emma González, an organizer from Parkland, posted on Twitter. "You deserve peace all your lives, not just after a tombstone saying that is put over you. You deserve more than Thoughts and Prayers, and after supporting us by walking out we will be there to support you by raising up your voices."

The voices of young Americans have already risen. The question is whether they will vote. Even some Republicans are beginning to believe they will.

"The shooting at Parkland high school was the tipping point for these kids," said Christine Matthews, a Republican pollster. "The bravery and activism of the Parkland kids ignited their peers across the country, and these newly minted 18-year-old voters are already motivated. The school shooting in Texas surely adds to their resolve, but, honestly, they didn't need any more motivation."

Voter data for March and April show that young registrants represented a higher portion of new voters in Florida, North Carolina and Pennsylvania, among other states. In Florida, voters under 26 jumped from less than 20 percent of new registrants in January and February to nearly 30 percent by March, the month of the gun control rallies. That ticked down to about 25 percent in April, as the demonstrations subsided, but registration of young voters remained above the pace set before 17 students and faculty were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

In North Carolina, voters under 25 represented around 30 percent of new registrations in January and February; in March and April, they were around 40 percent.

In Pennsylvania, voter registrations across age groups increased sharply in March and April before the primary last week, but registrations of young voters increased the fastest, jumping to 45 percent in March and more than half in April, from fewer than 40 percent of voters in January and February.

The trend was particularly stark in Broward County, site of the mass shooting in Parkland — and where more than a thousand young people were added to voter rolls in the week leading to the student-led March for Our Lives protests in March. Young voters represented only 16 percent of new registrants in January and February. In March, that number jumped to 46 percent, before slipping back to 25 percent in April.

Registrations among other groups remained relatively constant during the same period, in Broward and in Florida generally, according to data provided by the Florida Department of State Division of Elections.

The new registrants lean Democratic. Of the new voters ages 25 and under in the state, a third registered as Democrats; 21 percent signed up as Republicans; and 46 percent registered as either unaffiliated or with another political party. For new registrants over 25, 27 percent were Democrats; 29 percent were Republicans; and 44 percent were independent or affiliated with a different party.

In addition to the registration figures, new polling of younger voters from the Institute of Politics at Harvard Kennedy School found a significant jump from two years ago in those who say their in-



Students hanging a sign for a voter registration event at a high school in Stafford, Va. Organizers in the United States have vowed a political response to school shootings.

volvement will make a difference. Such optimism indicates a voter is more likely to turn out.

"What I have seen is what I am calling a once-in-a-generation attitudinal shift about the efficacy of participating in the political process," said John Della Volpe, the director of the institute, who has specialized in polling younger voters for nearly two decades. "I am optimistic

that the increasing interest we have tracked in politics will likely lead to increased participation in the midterms."

The combination of registration data, the Harvard survey and the influence of the independent groups suggest that younger voters, who typically do not turn out for midterms in great numbers, just might show up at the polls in November.

There is also reason for skepticism. According to research by Michael McDonald of the United States Elections Project, only about 20 percent of voters under 30 cast ballots in midterm elections, and Bill McInturff, a Republican pollster, is not betting that this year will be much different.

"Bottom line is that so far we are not seeing any higher level of self-described interest in the election among voters 18 to 34 years old than in past off-year elections," he said.

Comparison of voter registration numbers can be fraught. Fluctuations often represent changes in the law or the registration process as much as changes in voter enthusiasm. For example, some states, like California, have made mechanical changes to the registration process that make it easier to sign up to vote. Such mechanical

"The sheer number of individuals who say they will definitely vote, 37 percent, is as high as it's ever been."

changes do not necessarily translate into votes on Election Day.

Young voters typically vote at a lower rate in part because of a belief that their vote will not bring about meaningful change. But the data from Harvard shows that the percentage of young voters who disagreed with the statement that "political involvement rarely has any tangible results" rose to 36 percent this spring from 27 percent in spring 2016, and the number who agreed dropped to 22 percent from 26 percent.

In California, young voters are registering in record numbers. In the first three months of the year, more than 65,000 people ages 18 to 21 registered, numbers that were higher than either 2014 or 2016, said Paul Mitchell, president of Political Data, a private company in Sacramento that tracks registration in the state.

So far, the Harvard polling indicates that Democrats are the more likely beneficiary of the increased commitment to voting, with half of voters 18 to 29 saying they will vote Democratic. The remainder are divided between Republicans and independents.

"Also, just the sheer number of individuals who say they will definitely vote, 37 percent, is as high as it's ever been,"

Mr. Della Volpe said. "That's likely to only grow stronger. The number among Democrats is 51 percent saying they will definitely vote."

Younger voters were not moved by the campaigns of either Donald J. Trump or Hillary Clinton, but Mr. Trump's election reawakened them "only to be brought to life in more powerful ways in the last two months, post-Parkland shooting," Mr. Della Volpe said. "This now has the potential to turbocharge that."

The deaths in Texas may only add more fuel.

"We are fighting for you," David Hogg, a Parkland survivor and organizer, declared hours after the shooting at Santa Fe High School.

Several groups are working to help that happen. NextGen America, a group funded by the activist billionaire Tom Steyer, is focusing on voters ages 18 to 35 in 10 traditional battleground states, in addition to Arizona. The group reported on Monday that it had registered 36,789 voters, including 8,459 in Florida, its top state.

"This shows an increase in energy," said Aleigha Cavalier, the communications director for NextGen. "We know that young people don't vote as often as they should. This year we are seeing energy because they have a feeling of voting for or voting against, whether it's Donald Trump or issues that they care about, and on issues like gun safety, because we are seeing things happen in real time, like Parkland, that weren't happening before."

Another group, Inspire U.S., has been concentrating on registering high school students in their classrooms. It has registration drives in 10 states and more than 200 high schools, and has registered more than 41,000 students since the group started three years ago. Inspire U.S. also uses a texting app to remind users to vote.

"In training high school students to register their peers, that's where the power is," said Eileen Haag, who founded the group with her husband, Ira Lechner. "Students respond to other students."

The Parkland shooting suddenly made high schools an even more obvious place to register voters, she said. "I think there's a spark in awareness, but there is still a lot of work to be done to actually get these kids to the ballot box," she said.

The Latino who hunted Latinos

TUCSON, ARIZ.

BY SIMON ROMERO

The writer Francisco Cantú, who spent years as a Border Patrol agent, braced for the fury of anti-immigration figures and his former colleagues when he published a haunting memoir this year delving into the authorities' frequent abuse of immigrants in the Southwest borderlands.

But when such reactions were muted, Mr. Cantú wasn't prepared for the onslaught of criticism he received from the other end of the political spectrum, including undocumented writers and artists around the United States who view the Border Patrol as a paramilitary force inciting fear and destroying families.

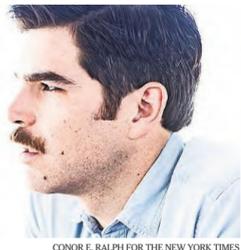
Some called Mr. Cantú, 32, a third-generation Mexican-American, a "Nazi" and "traitor" for joining the Border Patrol in the first place. Others appeared at readings of his book in California and Texas, drowning out the events by screaming "vendido" — sellout — in his direction. Critics suggested boycotting Mr. Cantú's book, "The Line Becomes a River," branding him a quisling who profits in others' blood.

"I don't see why Cantú gets to be absolved and celebrated by saying he paid witness to the tragedy he was complicit in upholding," said Jesús Valles, 31, a playwright and public high school teacher in Austin, Tex., who was among those protesting when Mr. Cantú recently traveled to Texas for book signings.

"It's hard to even explain the fear that the Border Patrol instills in people like me," added Mr. Valles, who was smuggled into Texas as a child before obtaining, years later, legal authorization to remain in the country. "It's a dread of being hunted down like an animal, of seeing your siblings deported. And Cantú gets a fancy book deal after being one of the guys holding the guns."

The simmering tension around Mr. Cantú and his book is igniting an energetic debate over who gets rewarded for telling stories of life along the border, highlighting quarrels between Latinos born in the United States and those who were brought illegally to the country as children.

In a twist to the wrangling over his



CONOR E. RALPH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Francisco Cantú, who wrote "The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border."

book, Mr. Cantú has caught some of his most strident critics off guard by thanking them and siding with them. In public appearances, he has asked that protesters be allowed to speak derisively of him and his book. And in an interview here in Tucson, where he lives, Mr. Cantú said he agreed with some of the charges leveled against him.

"My aim was to describe the Border Patrol from within, not justify it somehow," Mr. Cantú said over a meal at El Chivo de Oro, a food truck.

His book recounts incidents of Border Patrol agents — with Mr. Cantú among them, though usually, he said, only watching — slashing the water bottles migrants rely upon to survive, decorating cactuses with women's underwear and setting chain-fruit cholla ablaze under the night sky.

"You're encountering people who are completely terrified of you as law enforcement," he said.

Mr. Cantú made the transition from patrolling in the field to intelligence gathering. He describes in the book the dehumanizing language colleagues used to describe immigrants, as when a superior divided border crossers into "scumbags" and "P.O.s" — plain old wets.

Mr. Cantú said he had felt that there was no way to effectively speak out against the racist language that remains pervasive in the institution, though he did so in more intimate conversations he had with agents with whom he was close or who were junior to him.

"I felt that my individual actions were eclipsed by the grinding machinery of the system and culture of which I was part," he said.

Mr. Cantú said in the meandering interview that writing an account of a Latino who hunted down other Latinos for a living wasn't what he had in mind when he joined the Border Patrol at age 23 as a graduate of American University. He said he had expected to do the job for a few years before going into diplomacy or law school.

Javier Zamora, 28, a poet who emigrated without authorization from El Salvador to the United States at the age of 9, said he understood where some of the critics of Mr. Cantú were coming from, especially those who point out that the perspective of Mr. Cantú, a United States citizen, stands in contrast to those of millions of Latinos at risk of deportation in the country.

"The book resembles veteran writing and the dilemma that poses: Would you rather read a book by an Iraqi or something by an Iraq war veteran?" asked Mr. Zamora, author of the acclaimed 2017 poetry collection "Unaccompanied." "I go for the Iraqi writer."

Still, Mr. Zamora, who now lives in California and is at risk of being forced to leave the United States after the Trump administration reversed policies that had allowed nearly 200,000 Salvadorans to live in the country, said he appreciated much of Mr. Cantú's book, especially passages where he writes about the mental toll of his work, describing nightmares and grinding his teeth at night.

"It's that internal space of the mind that he describes that I think is valuable," said Mr. Zamora. "I find it hard to read nonfiction about the border because of the trauma it brings back, but this book isn't quite like that. It shows how the border is anything but black and white, but just very, very gray."

Still, other writers, including some who spent much of their lives in fear of immigration agents, are less charitable. "Cantú is a white-passing man who has never been undocumented," said Sonia Guiñansaca, 29, a poet brought to New York at age 5 from Ecuador to join her parents. She spent more than two decades living illegally in the United States before obtaining documents allowing her to remain in the country.

"It saddens me that he's benefiting from our stories when I have a phone book full of phenomenal migrant writers and artists who never get the same chance," Ms. Guiñansaca said.

CORRECTIONS

• The Economic View column on May 14 misstated the year that John Y. Campbell and Robert J. Shiller wrote a research paper about inflation-linked bonds known as Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities. It was 1996, not 1966.

• An article on May 14 about high-end sneaker resellers omitted the given

name of the chief executive of one of those resellers, GOAT. He is Eddy Lu.

• An article in the May 12-13 edition about Daniel Kramer and the English National Opera misstated Matthew Epstein's title at the Welsh National Opera. He was general director, not artistic director.

• An article on May 11 about shopping like British royalty misidentified the royal family member who bestowed an honor on Fortnum & Mason, a purveyor of tea and fine provisions. It was Queen Elizabeth II who granted the business one of its two royal warrants, not Prince Philip. (Its other royal warrant was granted by Prince Charles.)



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TECH

How to test scripts for gender balance

A screenwriter devises a tool to analyze bias before the casting call

BY MELENA RYZIK

The statistics are familiar to anyone who cares about the place of women on screen: Year after year, they appear less often, say fewer words and generally don't do as much in front of the camera. Numerous studies have corroborated the disparity between male and female characters in films, TV shows and ads.

But what if there was a way to analyze the gap before a movie hits the multiplex, when there is still time to address that persistent imbalance?

Now, a few Hollywood players have developed technology that aims to do that: new screenplay software that can discern whether a script is equitable for men and women.

The idea came from Christina Hodson, a screenwriter who is involved with Time's Up, the activist Hollywood organization addressing inequities in the industry.

If everything starts with the scripts, said Ms. Hodson, who specializes in female-driven action movies like the coming "Bumblebee" and a spinoff of Harley Quinn, starring Margot Robbie, "it made sense to me that we can do a lot ourselves, before they even leave our desk."

She wondered if screenwriting software — which writers almost universally use to format scripts — could easily tabulate the number of male and female roles, for example, and how much each character spoke. That way, writers could see and tackle the problem even before casting directors or producers had their say.

Ms. Hodson approached John August, a creator of the script software Highland, to see if he could make something of her brainstorm. In a word, yes. It was a snap: On Thursday, just weeks after that initial conversation, Highland 2, with the gender analysis tool that Ms. Hodson had dreamed up, became available in the Apple app store as a free download.

"I was immediately on board," said Mr. August, a screenwriter himself whose credits include Tim Burton's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and the forthcoming live-action "Aladdin."

"During the writing process, you're not always aware of how little your female characters are interacting or speaking," he said, "because you're only looking at a scene at a time, a page at a time. It's not a good overview."

Highland 2 provides a real-time snapshot of the overall gender balance. The results are sometimes surprising. With her heroine-centered movies, "I expected all of my scripts would be over 50 percent" female, Ms. Hodson said, "and they weren't."

That knowledge provides an opportunity to rethink some of the storytelling. "It's a tool for people to self-police and look at unconscious bias in their own work," she said.



"I expected all of my scripts would be over 50 percent" female, Christina Hodson said, "and they weren't."

GRAHAM WALZER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In conceiving the interface, Mr. August was careful about how the data was presented. "In no way did I want this to feel like scolding," he said. "I wanted this to feel approachable, and invite you to make changes."

Madeline Di Nonno, chief executive of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media at Mount Saint Mary's University, which has done extensive research into representation on screen, wel-

comed any innovation to push Hollywood in a more balanced direction.

"It's about systemic change," she said, "and it's about what are the touchpoints along the way where critical decisions are being made, and how can we provide an intervention at the very beginning."

In 2016, the institute, along with its partners at the University of Southern California and Google, announced a

software tool that used video and audio recognition and algorithms to decode gender and other details of characters on screen. Late last year, the group also developed a script-level gender assessment — what Ms. Di Nonno called "a spell-check for gender bias" — which has been quietly used by some studios and ad agencies in the last few months, she said. (It's not available commercially.)

The big hurdle in the industry will be buy-in. In response to questions from The New York Times about its products, Final Draft, maker of a leading screenplay software, said in a statement that its next iteration, Final Draft 11, due out within the year, will offer "enhancements" that allow writers "to analyze many different aspects of the script, including gender representation." (The company has long offered a free add-on called Tagger that lets writers tag attributes, including gender and race, for characters. The new version will make this a bigger standard feature.)

Even before Highland 2 hit the marketplace, it was making waves. In April, Ms. Hodson and Mr. August released a podcast about their collaboration and their hopes for it. Guy Goldstein, the founder of WriterDuet Inc., another screenplay software product, was listening, and inspired. His team immediately got to work.

"During the writing process, you're not always aware of how little your female characters are interacting or speaking."

The podcast "made us know that it was something that we really needed to do," Mr. Goldstein said. "We didn't realize the impact we could have until then. I think it's our responsibility as software developers to offer tools that help build awareness."

The WriterDuet tool, available online now, also includes an automated Bechdel test — which measures how many female characters there are and whether they discuss something other than a man — and even a reverse Bechdel test, which looks at men the same way. The tool also noted how many times the test was passed, using a minimum of seven lines of dialogue to qualify.

An examination of the last 10 Oscar winners for original screenplay offered dismal, if not surprising, results: Only one screenplay, Spike Jonze's "Her," passed WriterDuet's Bechdel test, Mr. Goldstein said in an email, when the unseen digital assistant, voiced by Scarlett Johansson, has one conversation with a little girl. "In contrast, every single script passes our reverse Bechdel test multiple times (as many as 40 times, in 'Spotlight')," he said.

Ms. Hodson and the software makers say they expect their tools will be expanded to address other issues of representation, like race and ethnicity, although that is more complicated, because those details are not always mentioned in scripts.

But in general, "this is all pretty easy," Mr. Goldstein said. "Technology can do this, and technology should be doing this."

Ms. Hodson envisioned these analytics being applied to projects already in development. "We can't enforce anything, but my hope is that people will be more invested in doing this as this conversation becomes more important," she said. "Why wouldn't you?"

Q+a

Paying to renew Microsoft Office

Microsoft keeps threatening to disable Word and Excel in a few days unless I pay \$70 for the Office 365 yearly renewal. I don't care about the latest features since not much has changed in the past year. How do I get around this and get rid of the pop-up box every time I open Word or Excel?

Microsoft has a few different versions of its Office suite available and the Office 365 edition is subscription-based — so think of it more as a rental and less of an outright purchase. To get rid of the pop-up boxes and be assured of functioning desktop software when you need it, you must renew the subscription for the \$69.99 annual fee for Office Home & Student 2016 with the one-time purchase price of \$149.99.

The Office Home & Student 2016 version includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote. Once you install it on your computer, you get 60 days of telephone support and security updates through extended support until 2025. However, you will not automatically get upgraded to Microsoft's next major release of its Office suite. If you just need basic word-processing and spreadsheet software, this version should fill your needs for the next few years and you will not get annually nagged to renew a subscription.

There are some advantages to the Office 365 subscription. These include updated features each month, plus a terabyte of online storage for your files on Microsoft's OneDrive servers, 60 minutes of Skype calls to landlines and mobile phones (instead of computer-to-computer or device-to-device communications). Technical support by phone or online chat is available as long as you subscribe.

For those who have very simple word-processing and spreadsheet needs for things like letters, reports and simple budgets, the free, web-based Office Online is another option, although you need an internet connection to use it. Apple's iWork for iCloud, Dropbox Paper and Google Docs and Zoho Workplace are similar web-based offerings and LibreOffice is a free alternative you can download and install on your computer.

Finding privacy for your email

After reading recently updated privacy policies, are there any web-based mail providers out there that do not scan your mail, mine your data or stick ads on your messages? If I wanted to leave Yahoo for a more secure mail provider, how can I move my mail and address book?

Free email services are generally free because those companies make money by selling advertising based on the data you generate. That is the trade-off.

Using encryption tools like OpenPGP is an option for more secure mail, but web-based mail services that build in privacy are another.

Most charge a fee, but some secure mail providers have free accounts that offer limited features and storage capacity.

Many of the more popular secure mail providers are based overseas and subject to the privacy laws in their particular country of incorporation, so read up before signing up. Some services include Countermail (Sweden), FastMail (Australia), Hushmail (Canada), ProtonMail (Switzerland), Run-Box (Norway) and Tutanota (Germany).

Compared with several other countries or regions, the United States has looser legal restrictions about what companies can do with customer data. For example, the United States government overturned certain consumer privacy protection laws last year, making it easier for broadband internet providers to track and sell customer data without first getting permission from those being tracked.

As for moving your existing mailbox and contacts to a new service, Yahoo Mail does not have an export function, but you might be able to download your messages to a third-party desktop mail program like Mozilla Thunderbird to get local copies. Yahoo's help site does have instructions for exporting your contacts list as a file that you can import elsewhere. J.D. BIERSDORFER



At left, ancient Alexandria as seen in the Discovery Tour mode of Assassin's Creed Origins. Right, the Assassin's Creed representation of Khafre's funerary complex in Egypt.



IMAGES FROM UBISOFT

Assassin's Creed in the classroom

Game franchise abandons violence to take players on tours of the ancient world

BY JUSTIN PORTER

History has long served as a backdrop in the Assassin's Creed video games, whose story lines center on pivotal times in history — from the Third Crusade to Imperial China and beyond. But when players of this Ubisoft series rush from mission to mission, as agents of events both great and small, their purpose is rarely to take the time to appreciate history itself. Duty always calls.

Until now.

Following last year's release of Assassin's Creed Origins, set in Ptolemaic Egypt, the team behind it decided that allowing players to learn more about life in ancient Egypt might make for a pretty cool teaching aid. So they traded in the quests and violence for antiquities and history lessons and created a mode with a series of Discovery Tours.

Edyeli Marku, a middle-school teacher at Intermediate School 230 in Jackson Heights, Queens, said there

could be "tremendous value in it," for both students and educators — particularly for students who might test as primarily visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. For those students, she added, "exposing them to a different learning vehicle is always beneficial."

Ms. Marku said she understands the importance of games to her students and has even used Oregon Trail as a teaching tool.

"They go on the phone like it's nothing," she said. "They go on an iPad, and they can spend hours in front of it."

Maxim Durand, who has been the lead researcher and history consultant for the Assassin's Creed franchise since 2010, and Jean Guesdon, the creative director on Origins, said they had often heard from educators who saw the potential of using the games. Some had even used small portions in their lessons. But so much of Assassin's Creed, given its violence and fictional narrative, is problematic in a school setting.

Even Ms. Marku said the violent content could hamper the franchise's acceptance for education purposes, especially for parents reacting to the name of the series or those familiar with its sub-

ject matter. In this version of the game, though, players guide their chosen avatar. It can be the sheriff-like character Bayek, the original protagonist of Assassin's Creed Origins, or one of 25 possible others including Bayek's wife, Aya; their son, Khemu; Cleopatra; Julius Caesar; Roman legionnaires; and even ordinary Egyptian, Greek and Roman adults and children.

A voice-over details the objects on view, including artifacts like pottery, scrolls, farm tools and baking ovens. The 75 available tours cover daily life, monuments, agriculture, the lives of Greek and Roman settlers, and other topics. At some locations, non-playable characters are seen performing tasks like baking bread, tilling a field or inscribing scrolls. Here players can elect to have their chosen avatar perform the activity. Maybe Cleopatra and Caesar never knelt before a bread oven to remove a hot loaf from the coals, but here players can have that experience.

The Library of Alexandria is another stop. In recreating it, Mr. Durand said, his team looked to the remnants of the Library of Celsus, which is still standing amid the ancient ruins in Ephesus, Turkey.

Of course, a lot of history's secrets are lost to time. That's where a Behind the Scenes feature comes in. The makers use it to explain how and why they chose to represent certain objects. Mr. Durand said he hoped this would also prompt students to think critically about how games are created and the way stories are told.

Marc-André Éthier, a professor at the University of Montreal who studies materials that are being used to teach high school history, noticed that traditional tools like textbooks were being used less.

When he heard about the Discovery Tour, he said, "I was intrigued, and I prepared a study to test if Discovery Tour could teach someone as much as a lecture."

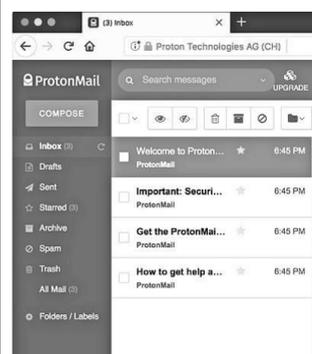
Mr. Éthier said he approached Ubisoft with an idea for what eventually became a study of some 330 students, 12 to 16 years old, in nine schools in Montreal. Students were divided into groups of 40. First, all the students were given a test. Then half of each group took the Library of Alexandria tour, and the other had a lesson with a teacher. Afterward, they took a second quiz. Mr. Éthier said the students working with a teacher did bet-

ter on the test than the ones who had only taken the tour. Though the test scores of the students who took the tour still showed improvement, of 22 percent to 44 percent.

To make the games accessible to a broader range of schools, which typically have computers or tablets rather than game consoles, Ubisoft released a standalone version of the Discovery Tour for computers, even those with aging hardware.

Evelyne Ferron, who specializes in Egyptian history and worked on the project, said she wanted players to "realize the colors of Egypt." Today the Sphinx, the pyramids and temples are bleached white, but they were once vividly colored. Players can see the gold and blue of the sphinx, and the rich browns, blues and greens of the hieroglyphics and murals on the temple walls.

Still, she said, full realism is not always possible and is sometimes less important when entertainment is the goal. "When you create a game," Ms. Ferron said, "you need to create immersion." A historian taking a strict view of history would not sacrifice realism, she said. "Sometimes you have to trick history!"



ProtonMail is one web-based provider offering private email services.

Business



Holywell, a small Welsh town, was hit hard when many shoppers switched to buying goods online, or in bigger stores in neighboring cities. The town's High Street, below left, struggled to keep its stores from closing. Below right, Ted Palmer, owner of Sweeney Ted's barber shop in Holywell, awaiting his next customer.



A step back from the brink

HOLYWELL, WALES
Small Welsh town gutted by e-commerce turns to technology to stay afloat

Officials in this Welsh town will soon install free WiFi along their lone shopping street. They are erecting the first electric car chargers in the town. And in the past winter, small businesses began partnerships with an American mobile payments system in the hope of getting more people in their stores.

This is smart-town tech — the scatter-shot response as communities try in any way possible to draw shoppers back to their High Streets and Main Streets.

Many places like Holywell are experimenting with new technologies and digital services, in a defensive crouch against the dominance of e-commerce and the lure of bigger cities. Along with the car chargers and free WiFi, officials here have added digital "beacons" that describe local attractions to aid smartphone-toting tourists.

Although such efforts will hardly insulate their economies, the alternative amounts to giving up. Shop owners hope the moves will help them survive and improve the mood of an area that has been declining for decades.

"At the end of the day, we're a little town in the middle of nowhere," said Ted Palmer, whose barbershop lies just off Holywell's main shopping area, the High Street. "Unless you're open to change, you will drown."

Holywell lies close to a Christian religious site popular with tourists and is a short drive from the Welsh coast, but it has always relied on its shops to fuel the local economy. In recent years, though, many have closed, including a stationery store, a drugstore and an appliance retailer. Then, in a matter of months, three of the town's four bank branches closed.

Its High Street is a shell of its former self. Shopping is increasingly being done over the internet, and major retailers are able to drive down prices while offering premium services like next-day delivery on hard-to-find items.

Customers in Holywell can have their groceries brought straight to their front doors from online supermarkets like Ocado, and much else from the shopping behemoth Amazon. Instead of local grocery stores, residents can drive up to a mammoth Tesco supermarket a short distance from the High Street, or take the short walk to Home Bargains, a na-



Business was not brisk for William Bailey, a fishmonger, and Tony Kyle, a butcher.

tionwide discount retailer. Indeed, in much of Britain and the world, people can use smartphones and the internet to get restaurants to dispatch food to their homes, arrange an appointment with a repair person or cleaner, and have their laundry picked up.

The bank branch closings here hit particularly hard. The buildings that once housed them stand unoccupied, one of them still bearing a silhouette of the lender that departed, HSBC.

The closings have forced stores to keep large amounts of cash on site, leaving some shop owners fearful of burglaries or thefts. People who would have gone into the town to do their banking are going elsewhere. And foot traffic into the center of Holywell, a town with a population of 9,000, has dropped off drastically.

When Helen Ryles-Owen opened her stationery store in the middle of Holywell, her only local competitor had recently shut down, and her sister promised to help run the new business. But their timing — opening just weeks before the bank closings began — was bad.

"Would I have opened here" knowing the branches were closing, Ms. Ryles-Owen asked. "I would have thought twice."

The efforts by Holywell to transform itself and its town center belie its long history. In the British vernacular, Holywell is a market town. Edward I granted monks a charter to establish a weekly market here in the 13th century, and they used it to sell ale and collect taxes from farmers and traders who came to hawk their wares. By the beginning of the 19th century, there were dozens of shops, inns and beer houses.

While the weekly market still continues, it now varies between around 25 stalls during the Christmas period, down to half a dozen during the cold and wet days of winter. Offices of the local council, which is responsible for issues like garbage collection as well as services like libraries, moved to another town long ago, taking jobs with them. Workers at a nearby quarry and asphalt plant rarely venture into Holywell, staying instead at a hotel on the town's outskirts.

Shop owners hope the moves will help them survive and improve the mood of an area that has declined for decades.

The High Street, which runs less than 300 yards, is today an assortment of cafes, barber shops and stores selling items ranging from e-cigarettes to shoes. The lone surviving bank branch, of the Spanish lender Santander, has a single ATM. Holywell residents complain there is always a queue, and the machine frequently runs out of cash.

The town's embrace of tech was haphazard.

In recent years, the monthly meetings of a local government committee featured regular discussion of the difficulties faced by the town's High Street and potential solutions. The High Street, which was fully pedestrianized decades ago, would be reopened to vehicle traffic. Electric vehicle chargers would be installed to lure wealthier car owners. Free WiFi would be added to help ensure those customers stuck around.

Then at the Labour Party's annual

conference in September, David Hanson, Holywell's member of Parliament, ran into Sarah Harvey, who heads the British operations of Square, the American mobile payments company. A trial was hatched.

Square would offer its card readers — small white boxes that connect to a smartphone — free to businesses in Holywell.

And the Silicon Valley company would use the experience to learn about companies in Britain, a market it had entered only months earlier.

For small businesses, Square and others like it can be a cheaper alternative to the companies that currently dominate card processing. Square typically sells its card readers for a one-off charge, and charges a flat 1.75 percent fee on all card transactions carried out in-store. Traditional services that are usually found in stores usually charge a monthly rental for readers, and often require longer-term contracts.

Retailers in Holywell say another benefit is the portability of Square's readers, which connect easily to smartphones and can be carried to trade fairs and shows.

Business owners here are cleareyed about the impact so far. The service has not suddenly driven a significant increase in trade, nor do they expect it to. But many say it has stanchied a fall, and allowed them to appeal to a wider array of customers, particularly younger ones, who use cash less than previous generations.

At a recent reception held near Parliament in London, Mr. Hanson, representatives from Square and Holywell business owners related their experience to more than a dozen lawmakers. Questions ranged from how the system worked (trial units were on hand) to how fast entrepreneurs received payments (the next working day).

Russ Warburton, 56, was one of more than 60 business owners in Holywell who signed up for Square. Revenue for his lighting business had fallen by almost 30 percent after the branch closings. Using Square helped flatten that out. He acknowledged that was a small victory, but one that nevertheless encouraged him — and other fellow business owners — to consider new investments. Mr. Warburton is now expanding from lighting to antiques and refurbishing furniture.

"It doesn't solve the problem," Mr. Warburton, the chairman of the town's business council, said. "You're never going to get the High Street back to what it was 30, 40 years ago, because people's shopping habits have changed."

"We're just trying everything we can to bring people back into the town."

How easy is it to get your personal data?

BY NATASHA SINGER AND PRASHANT S. RAO

The European Union will put in place one of the toughest data privacy laws in the world this week. The law, among other things, gives people in Europe the right to obtain the personal data companies have on them.

That is a sweeping right to data access that Americans don't have.

So we decided to conduct a privacy experiment: Request our data in both Britain and the United States, to get a sense of how easily people in Europe will gain access to their personal information, compared with people in the United States.

We conducted our experiment using a 20-year-old law in Britain that already entitles individuals to see the personal data held about them by companies in that country. We thought the test could serve as a trial run to see how the new European law, known as the General Data Protection Regulation, or G.D.P.R., might play out.

Natasha, a technology reporter in New York, and Prashant, an editor in London, requested their records in their respective countries from Amazon, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, their mobile providers and marketing analytics companies that profile users.

The results were not what we expected.

EXPANSIVE ANALYTICS
Prashant's marketing analytics service that categorizes and targets online users for marketing purposes, sent me a spreadsheet with about 200 entries tracking my activities. They contained an astonishing degree of detail about my life.

It showed that I had used OpenTable to make a dinner reservation in March at a "casual" Indian restaurant in London, that I had read a CNN article on President Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs, that I was looking to buy a new cellphone and was considering a trip to Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Then there were the 343 marketing classifications Quanticast had obtained about me from data brokers, companies that sell consumers' details for marketing purposes.

The categorizations had me pegged as "a heavy spender. The pet food I have a cat, an owner of a flat-screen TV and part of a 'likely nonsmoking household.' My colleagues in London will be unsurprised to learn that among my "interests" are biscuits and chocolate.

But the report also suggested there was a 3 percent likelihood that I am a woman above the age of 65 and that I own a car. (I am, to be clear, a man in my 30s. I got my first driver's license a few months ago and do not own a car.)

Natasha: My spreadsheet from Quanticast contained just one single line of data: It showed that on Jan. 19 at 7:01 p.m., I read an article on Forbes.com about Google's new eliminating certain features for parents to control their children's web-browsing. The spreadsheet even listed the author of the article: Kevin Murran.

As with all these companies, Prashant and I acted as much as possible like regular consumers when we initially requested our information. But after our requests, we followed up with the companies as reporters. When I contacted Quanticast to ask why it had received only one line of data, a spokesman said users' privacy settings could influence what details Quanticast collected. (I distrust online surveillance and use various software tools to monitor tracking.)

The Quanticast spokesman added that the company responded to data access requests under European law. So sending me any data at all had been an error — because consumers in the United States do not have a comprehensive right to obtain copies of the data held by American companies.

AMAZON HISTORY
Prashant: A Kindle reader, a square cake pan, a carbon monoxide alarm.

Amazon sent lists of the items my wife and I had bought through the site, the credit cards we used to buy them, the addresses the items were shipped to and the devices we had used to gain access to Amazon services.

But we had expected to receive a more substantial data trove from Amazon. So I wrote back to Amazon asking again for all of the details the company had on me, including our household's video-viewing data.

The company said it was "investigating" and would send the missing data when it was ready. There is still sign of it. An Amazon spokesman added that the company was committed to complying with the new European privacy law.

Natasha: I used Amazon's self-service tool to download a copy of my purchase orders — including batteries for the outmoded BlackBerry phone that I was having trouble giving up in 2015. (I now own two iPhones.)

But I wanted the complete history of my account, such as my Amazon searches.

Amazon responded to my email request by telling me to call the company — because it was "too safe to get account details via email due to security reasons." Then I called Amazon

customer service and was put on hold for 15 minutes while an agent scrambled to figure out my response.

Finally, the agent came back on the line only to tell me that Amazon was keeping records on me for business purposes — but would not share them with me.

"It's all private," the agent said. "I don't have access to that information to provide you unfortunately."

LIMITED DATA
Prashant and Natasha: LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook provide self-service tools for users to download certain information — such as their posts and messages. Google offers a tool that lets us download files of the Google searches they have made, as well as the sites Google has tracked them to, their YouTube histories and Calendar data. We used these systems and obtained some of our information.

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's chief executive, recently told United States lawmakers that his company's download tool contains "all of the information" that users have "put into Facebook or that Facebook knows about them."

But Facebook actually collects much more data about its users. In addition to the updates and photos you submit to the site, for instance, Facebook collects data about users' activities on millions of non-Facebook sites that use tools like the service's Like button. And those tools allow the company to amass detailed information about users' web-browsing.

We were unable to obtain that kind of information, however.

We each asked Facebook for copies of our web-browsing data, as well as any data the company acquired about us from data brokers or other services. We made similar requests of Twitter and LinkedIn, which can also collect details about users' activities on other sites as well as personal details from third parties like employers or advertisers.

None provided us with copies of that raw information.

Instead, from LinkedIn, we each received emails directing us to use the company's self-service tool. Among other things, our LinkedIn downloads included the email addresses of our connections.

From Twitter, we received emails saying the company required copies of our government-issued ID cards before it would provide user details beyond those available from the company's self-service tool. Natasha, who regularly covers privacy issues, decided to entrust Twitter with a copy of her ID card. Prashant sent his ID to Twitter and received data about a week later, soon after we contacted Twitter's press department. The press department included IP address logs, direct messages and every GIF he has ever posted (there were a lot).

Facebook told Natasha that its self-service data download tool "has been reviewed by our data protection regulator" and would allow her "to access all of your Facebook data." The company told Prashant that the self-service tool would give him access only to the Facebook information available to you and that the company "isn't able to provide additional information."

Matt Steinfeld, a Facebook spokesman, said the social network's ad preferences tool, which is available to the Facebook information available to you and that the company "isn't able to provide additional information."

After we contacted LinkedIn's press department, we received emails the next day saying that the company was working on our requests. A LinkedIn spokesman said that users could automatically download "the most commonly requested data" and that the company did not currently plan to change its data request process.

INCOMPLETE RESPONSES
Prashant and Natasha: We were not just seeking our data for data's sake.

As we all become more aware of fraud, identity theft and other manipulation, researchers, journalists and consumers have been seeking all of their personal details from companies to try to understand how we might be manipulated. The incomplete responses from tech companies do not bode well for such research efforts.

Nor does it seem to bode well for the companies, which will soon be facing the new European privacy regulations.

After we wrote to our cellphone carriers to ask for our records, for instance, Natasha at least heard back from T-Mobile, who told her that it would release her phone records only if the carrier received a subpoena compelling it to do so.

Prashant did not hear back at all from Three, his mobile phone service. When he contacted the company as a reporter, Three said it could not give the carrier the particular case for privacy reasons, but added that it would typically send a letter asking for proof of identity before proceeding with a data request.

It's unclear how, given the name the phone contract is in, never received such a letter.

BUSINESS



ANGELA JIMENEZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



JENN ACKERMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Left, Periwinkle Doerfler, a doctoral student and an author of a study on the use of apps in secret monitoring, said there are app makers that are complicit in stalking. Above, some of the phones under investigation by the sheriff's department in Dakota County, Minn. Right, Tim Leslie, the Dakota County sheriff, and Derrick Warnecke, an electronics forensic analyst. After Mr. Warnecke was hired by the department, conviction rates for cases involving stalking and technology rose to 94 percent from 50 percent.



JENN ACKERMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

How a stalker can hide in your pocket

BY JENNIFER VALENTINO-DEVRIES

KidGuard is a phone app that markets itself as a tool for keeping tabs on children. But it has also promoted its surveillance for other purposes and run blog posts with headlines like “How to Read Deleted Texts on Your Lover’s iPhone.”

A similar app, mSpy, offered advice to a woman on secretly monitoring her husband. Still another, Spyzie, ran ads on Google alongside results for search terms like “catch cheating girlfriend iPhone.”

As digital tools that gather cellphone data for tracking children, friends or lost phones have multiplied in recent years, so have the options for people who abuse the technology to track others without consent.

More than 200 apps and services offer would-be stalkers a variety of capabilities, from basic location tracking to harvesting texts and even secretly recording video, according to a new academic study. More than two dozen services were promoted as surveillance tools for spying on romantic partners, according to the researchers and reporting by The New York Times. Most of the spying services required access to victims’ phones or knowledge of their passwords — both common in domestic relationships.

Digital monitoring of a spouse or partner can constitute illegal stalking, wiretapping or hacking. But laws and law enforcement have struggled to keep up with technological changes, even though stalking is a top warning sign for attempted homicide in domestic violence cases.

“We misunderstand and minimize this abuse,” said Erica Olsen, director of the Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence. “People think that if there’s not an immediate physical proximity to the victim, there might not be as much danger.”

Statistics on electronic stalking are hard to find because victims may not know they are being watched, or they may not report it. Even if they believe they are being tracked, hidden software can make confirmation difficult.

But data breaches at two surveillance companies last year — revealing accounts of more than 100,000 users, according to the technology site Motherboard — gave some sense of the scale. The tracking app company mSpy told The New York Times that it sold subscriptions to more than 27,000 users in the United States in the first quarter of this year.

According to data published last year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 27 percent of women and 11 percent of men in the United States at

some point endure stalking or sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner that has significant effects. While comprehensive numbers aren’t available on domestic abuse cases involving digital stalking in the United States, a small survey published in Australia in 2016 found that 17 percent of victims were tracked via GPS, including through such apps.

In a Florida case involving abusive surveillance, a man named Luis Toledo installed an app called SMS Tracker on his wife’s phone in 2013 because he suspected she was having an affair. “He said he was able to see text messages and photos his wife was sending and receiving from others,” Sgt. A. J. Pagliari of the Volusia County Sheriff’s Office recalled.

This January, Mr. Toledo was sentenced to three consecutive life terms after being convicted of killing his wife, Yessenia Suarez, and her two children. Sergeant Pagliari said Mr. Toledo told him he installed the app several days before her death. “With the use of the app, Toledo was able to confirm his suspicion,” the sergeant said.

Representatives for SMS Tracker, made by the Dallas-based Gizmoquip, did not respond to requests for comment about the app’s role in the case.

AN OPENING FOR ABUSE

There is no federal law in the United States against location tracking, but such monitoring can violate state laws on stalking. Spying on communications can break statutes on wiretapping or computer crime. And knowingly selling illegal wiretapping tools is a federal crime.

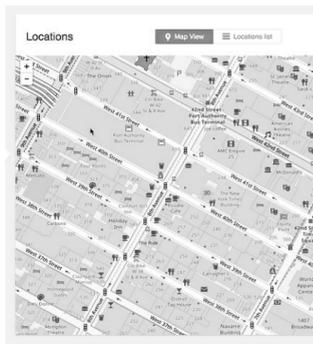
But it’s not illegal to sell or use an app for tracking your children or your own phone. And it can be difficult to tell whether the person being surveilled has given consent, because abusers frequently coerce victims into using such apps.

In Everson, Wash., for example, Brooks Owen Laughlin is accused of beating his wife and using an app typically used for benign purposes, Find My iPhone, to control her movements.

“If she would turn it off, he would instantly call her or text her and say, ‘Why did you turn that off? What are you doing?’ That was pretty much 24-7,” Chief Daniel MacPhee of the Everson Police Department, said in an interview. Mr. Laughlin pleaded not guilty in April to charges of assault, harassment and stalking.

Such technical and legal ambiguity has created an environment in which tools are marketed for both legal and illegal uses, without apparent repercussion.

“There are definitely app makers that



More than 200 apps and services offer would-be stalkers a variety of electronic capabilities, including basic location tracking, harvesting texts and secretly recording video.

are complicit, seeking out these customers and advertising this use,” said Periwinkle Doerfler, a doctoral student at New York University and an author of the study on apps, which will be presented in the coming days. “They’re a little bit under the radar about it, but they’re still doing it.”

The researchers, from N.Y.U., Cornell University and Cornell Tech, contacted customer support for nine companies with tracking services. The researchers claimed to be women who wanted to secretly track their husbands, and only one company, TeenSafe, refused to assist.

KidGuard, the app largely aimed at parents, also bought ads alongside Google results for searches like “catch cheating spouse app.” A spokesman for the business, based in Los Angeles, said in an email that the company worked with third-party marketers and customer service reps who had been “testing new strategies.” It deleted blog posts about tracking romantic partners and said it did not support that activity.

Spyzie, another app that ran such ads,



did not respond to requests for comment.

On YouTube, dozens of videos provide tutorials on using several of the apps to catch cheating lovers. The videos frequently link back to the app makers’ sites using a special code that ensures the promoter will get a cut of the sale — a deal known as affiliate marketing.

Affiliate marketing also appeared on multiple websites that discussed using surveillance apps to track romantic partners. One site, spyblog.ml, had posts about spying on “loved ones” and linked to mSpy. The app company said that its terms of service prohibited illegal activity and that it would block the site from its affiliate program.

Reviews and online discussions about the apps suggest the market for spying on spouses has been important to the businesses. FlexiSPY, an app company, posted survey results on its site showing that 52 percent of potential customers were interested because they thought their partners might be cheating. The company said the data was five years old and “no longer relevant.”

CAPABILITIES DEPEND ON THE PHONE
The proliferation of such tracking apps raises questions about the role of businesses like Google and Apple in policing their services.

The two companies, which run nearly all smartphones in the United States, have long taken different approaches to regulating apps.

Apple makes it difficult for iPhone users to download apps from outside the company’s App Store, and has many restrictions on what apps in its store can do. After testing several programs available in the stores on both platforms, the researchers found that Apple’s strict rules resulted in more limited surveillance capabilities on those apps than those running Google’s software.

Many App Store apps offered location tracking for phones. But for more intrusive surveillance, spying companies had to work around Apple’s restrictions by using the victim’s name and password to get data. To combat misuse by predators, an Apple spokesman said, the company urges people to use a tool called two-factor authentication to help protect their accounts even if their passwords are stolen.

Google prides itself on being more open. Its smartphone software, Android, allows people to install apps from anywhere, and the most invasive ones were found outside the company’s app store, Play.

The researchers found two apps in the Google Play store that allowed the app icon to be hidden from victims and the camera to run without notifications, as well as a handful of others that tracked users’ locations without telling them, all apparent violations of Google’s rules.

“They’re not enforcing their own policies,” Ms. Doerfler, the N.Y.U. researcher, said. “If someone reports it then they’ll take it down, but it’s not something they are checking within their operating system.”

In response to the researchers’ findings, Google tightened several policies “to further restrict the promotion and distribution” of surveillance apps, a company spokesman said. The company provides funding to the N.Y.U. team that helped conduct the study.

Google removed many spying and tracking apps and blocked advertising on search results about spying on spouses and romantic partners. YouTube, owned by Google, took down some videos about spying services, although the company determined that others didn’t violate its policies because the services could be used with consent.

ENFORCING THE LAW

Many law enforcement agencies don’t have the computer skills to quickly help stalking victims, or they don’t devote fo-

rensic resources to domestic abuse and stalking cases, which in many states are misdemeanors.

One sheriff’s department, in Dakota County, Minn., is trying to tackle the problem of abusive digital surveillance, and has used Justice Department grants to hire a forensic specialist.

The sheriff, Tim Leslie, said that from 2015 to 2017, the department went to court in 198 cases involving technology and stalking or domestic abuse, on par with earlier years. Its conviction rate rose to 94 percent from 50 percent, with many more suspects pleading guilty instead of contesting the charges, he said.

In one case, the specialist analyzed a woman’s phone and found it had a program on it called Mobile Spy, bought using her then-husband’s email address. The specialist could see that it had been launched 122 times. The effect of the stalking was “profound,” the woman said.

Even though it had been more than a year since the app was last used, the man was charged with misdemeanor stalking and pleaded guilty in 2015.

“We go after the misdemeanor stuff pretty hard, in the theory that if you stop that, it doesn’t escalate,” Sheriff Leslie said.

Federal cases involving such spying are rare. The Justice Department in 2014 charged the maker of a spying program called StealthGenie under a wiretap law that prohibits advertising and selling a device for “surreptitious interception.” The developer paid a \$500,000 fine, shut down StealthGenie and was sentenced to time served.

Victims’ advocates said they noticed after the case that makers of surveillance tools changed their tactics, sometimes moving computer servers overseas or scrubbing explicit language about spousal spying from their websites. “As soon as these companies caught wind that they shouldn’t be doing it, they just changed their marketing,” Ms. Olsen said.

One app maker told The Times that he hired a legal team after the StealthGenie case to help him avoid running afoul of the law. “There were a few modifications we had to make,” said Patrick Hinchey, the founder of New York-based ILF Mobile Apps, which makes Highest Mobile and other services. Several apps, he said, removed call recording and delayed the availability of the data by 10 to 15 minutes. Mr. Hinchey said the company only provided assistance to customers that it believed was legal.

When a researcher recently contacted the company and asked, “If I use this app to track my husband, will he know that I am tracking him?” the representative responded: “Our software is undetectable from the home screen.”

Paying taxes stealthily with bags of cash

BY JULIE WEED

Charity Gates phones her contact each month to make an appointment. When the time comes, she and a colleague drive around Denver, collecting stacks of \$20 bills she has stored in various safes since the last delivery. She counts the cash and places it in small duffel or sling bags, carrying up to \$20,000 at a time.

She then drives to a gray two-story office building downtown and parks on the street or in a pay lot nearby. Ms. Gates fears being robbed, so the two dress simply to avoid attention and use different vehicles and delivery days to vary their routine. “We hold our breath every time we go,” Ms. Gates said.

Passing armed guards in the lobby, Ms. Gates walks into a room and hands her bags to a group of people waiting to run her money through counting and counterfeit-detection machines.

This is how she pays her taxes.

Ms. Gates runs Colorado’s Best Dabs, a company that processes cannabis to extract concentrated oils that are used to create marijuana-infused “edibles” like brownies and teas. She is among the growing number of entrepreneurs who find themselves operating in legal gray zones, as more states around the United States move to legalize marijuana while the federal government still regards it as an illegal substance on par with heroin and LSD. People may be able to open

stores and sell their products to customers in the 30 states that have legalized the drug for medicinal or recreational use, but they find themselves without access to banks to provide them with loans or checking accounts.

“We can get fined for moving a light switch without telling the city building department, but we can’t get a bank account,” Ms. Gates said.

What has resulted is a cash economy, with many like Ms. Gates making monthly and annual tax payments in hard currency instead of with checks or electronic transfers.

Companies that grow, process or sell cannabis products reported an estimated \$12.9 billion in revenue in 2017, according to BDS Analytics, an industry group in Boulder, Colo. Up to \$4.7 billion was collected in related taxes.

For most other businesses, paying taxes often means using the Electronic Federal Tax Payment System, an online portal run by the Internal Revenue Service that allows people to transfer funds from a bank account to the Treasury Department. But without access to banks, marijuana entrepreneurs are left to pay in a decidedly more manual way. “Imagine feeding \$20,000 of cash through a machine, one \$20 bill at a time,” said Ms. Gates of the tax payment process. “It can take two or three hours each time.”

The federal government has a history of taking a hard-line view of this indus-



VALERIE NARTE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tai Cheng, a chief operating officer, runs his cannabis company in Hawaii on cash.

try. In 2015, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City likened Colorado’s legalization of marijuana to allowing “trade in endangered species or trade with North Korea.”

But that hard-line is beginning to change, which could mean that down the road, federal regulations might loosen up.

Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York, said last month that he would introduce a bill decriminalizing

cannabis. And President Trump recently suggested that he would be open to signing a law that would allow states to control their cannabis industries without threat of federal prosecution. A business group, the National Cannabis Industry Association, recently produced a video encouraging citizens to ask Congress to “support legal small businesses that are successfully replacing the criminal marijuana market.” More than 200 of its members will visit

Washington starting Monday to lobby Congress on issues including banking and taxes.

John Boehner, the former speaker of the House of Representatives who had been one of the most staunch opponents of legal marijuana, said his views have changed. He recently joined the advisory board of Acreage Holdings, an investment firm dedicated to the cannabis industry. Bill Weld, the former Republican governor of Massachusetts who also has joined the Acreage advisory board, said he believed cannabis could help wean people off opioids.

Shutting off access to the federal banking system presents a variety of risks, said Peter Conti-Brown, an assistant professor of legal studies and business ethics at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School. The chance of income being underreported increases, he said, as does the chance of employee theft or even armed robbery as large amounts of cash move through the business ecosystem.

“Marijuana businesses and banks are caught in the crossfire,” Mr. Conti-Brown said.

Some credit unions and small banks that are chartered by their state, not the federal government, have tried to fill the void by offering basic banking services to the cannabis industry.

Tai Cheng, the chief operating officer for Aloha Green Apothecary in Hawaii, a state where marijuana is legal for medi-

cal purposes, runs his company almost completely in cash.

Aloha Green grows cannabis plants, processes harvests and sells a variety of marijuana products at a dispensary in Honolulu. Mr. Cheng says he has been unable to find any bank or credit union in the state that will open a bank account for his cannabis company.

Places like Hawaii have begun trying technological solutions in the absence of a legislative ones. The government has been allowing dispensaries to use CanPay, a mobile payment system for medical marijuana patients run in partnership with a Colorado-based credit union. Dispensaries can use money paid via CanPay to write checks or make electronic payments that pay taxes and other bills.

But so far for Mr. Cheng, not enough patients have used the system to make it a reliable source of electronic funds.

Mr. Cheng says he just wants to operate like any other business. When he pays his taxes, Mr. Cheng has private security teams accompany him to the state office.

He says he has studied the government building’s different entrances and exits, and shows up at different times and days to make himself less of a robbery target.

“We dutifully pay our taxes, and the government happily accepts it,” he said. “It’s ridiculous to have to jump through all these hoops.”

Opinion

Under the warm concern of the party

For decades, China has tapped Chinese people overseas to spread its influence and harvest intelligence on its behalf.

Yi-Zheng Lian

Amid all the hoopla about Russia's covert attempts to manipulate the 2016 American presidential election, one state has been conspicuously quiet: China. Yet its leaders may well be sneering at the Russians' heavy hand. Since the project masterminded from Moscow largely relied on social media in the United States, American techies were bound to find out about it soon enough. Likewise with the bald-faced poisoning of an ex-Russian spy and his daughter in Britain, which has also been pegged to Moscow. Too crude, too traceable, these operations could only generate a backlash.

China, too, can be a bully, especially with Asian governments in its immediate sphere of influence — imposing economic sanctions on South Korea for deploying defensive missiles or orchestrating the kidnapping of book publishers from Hong Kong and Thailand. But it doesn't usually set out to openly hurt or antagonize stronger opponents like the United States; instead, it tries to quietly gain an edge for the long haul.

Rather than coercing, China manipulates, preferring to act in moral and legal gray areas. It masks its political motives behind

China has a well-oiled network. Its ploys are difficult to discern, and its plants hard to dislodge.

laudable human-interest or cultural projects, blurring the battle line with its adversaries. When the job is done, the other side may not realize it was gamed, or that a strategic game was even going on.

If this sounds like the stuff of conspiracy theories, it's because there is a conspiracy afoot, and it isn't theoretical. The Confucius Institutes and Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) cells being established on campuses outside China are but a few dots in this picture — when the whole lot are properly connected they outline a vast, smooth-running machine that taps Chinese people throughout the world to spread its influence and harvest intelligence in the service of the Chinese state.

Take the story of Chen Ning Yang, a Nobel laureate in physics. Mr. Yang left China in the mid-1940s and then studied under Edward Teller, the father of the hydrogen bomb. After he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1957, the Chinese authorities sent emissaries, including his father, to secretly meet him in Geneva and entreat him to return home. Mr. Yang repeatedly refused, and became an American citizen in 1964.

But when China began opening up in the 1970s, he returned to help modernize Chinese physics research. Beijing, well aware of the importance of physics for China's development — as well as the possible demonstration effect of Mr. Yang's newfound patriotism on other Chinese scientists overseas — practically made him a national hero. And more.

In late 2004, just over a year after



his wife had died, Mr. Yang married the young Chinese graduate student whom the authorities had assigned to be his personal assistant at a major conference; in February 2017, when he was 94, it was announced that he — as well as another returnee, the Turing Award-winner Andrew Chi-Chih Yao —

had renounced his American citizenship. Prudish media scorned the marriage because of the couple's vast age difference, but serious critics pointed out that pairing a high-value target with a young wife was an established practice of the C.C.P.; there is even a stock phrase for receiving such atten-

tions from the state: coming under "the warm concern of the Party" (or the premier). A young spouse was also the reward for Li Zongren, a former top general and acting president of the Republican government that the Communists overthrew in 1949, after he returned to China in the mid-1960s.

Zhou Enlai, then China's premier, is said to have personally overseen Mr. Li's case. I know of no official record showing that the Chinese leadership masterminded Mr. Yang's remarriage, but there is ample circumstantial evidence, including statements by the LIAN, PAGE 11

The Mississippi man tried six times for the same crime

A prosecutor seems to have a vendetta against Curtis Flowers, as a new podcast documents.



David Leonhardt

One morning nearly 22 years ago, four employees of a furniture store in a small Mississippi town were shot to death. For months afterward, local law-enforcement seemed stumped by the crime. Eventually, the top prosecutor — Doug Evans — charged a former store employee, Curtis Flowers, a black man who had no criminal record.

The case since then has been unlike any other I've ever heard of. Evans has put Flowers on trial six separate times — even though no gun, fingerprints or other physical evidence ties Flowers to the crime and no witness even puts him at the store that day.

At each of the first three trials, Flowers was convicted, but the Mississippi Supreme Court threw out all three convictions. The first two times, it cited misconduct by Evans during the trial, and the third time it found that Evans had kept African-Americans off the jury. The justices called it as bad a case of such racial discrimination "as we have ever seen."

circumstantial testimony that Evans had coached witnesses to give. I see no good reason to believe that Curtis Flowers is guilty.

Yet today he sits in solitary confinement, on death row, in Mississippi's Parchman Prison. He is serving his 22nd straight year behind bars, having never been released between convictions. He will turn 48 years old next week. His parents continue to visit him as often as possible.

His heartbreaking, enraging story is the subject of a new podcast — the second season of "In the Dark," led by Madeleine Barran of American Public Media — that's already been downloaded more than two million times. The reporting and storytelling are fantastic, and I can't capture all of it here. If you aren't already listening to the podcast, I recommend it.

While the Flowers case is shocking in its details, it is all too typical in its broad strokes: The United States suffers from a crisis of unjust imprisonment. The crisis has been caused partly by powerful, unaccountable prosecutors, like Doug Evans. And the costs are borne overwhelmingly by black men, like Flowers.

We now know that dozens of innocent people have been executed in recent decades. Many others languish behind bars. My colleague Nicholas Kristof, in his latest column, told the story of Kevin Cooper, who's on death row in California because of highly questionable evidence. Cases like these are the most extreme part of our mass-incarceration problem. As the legal scholar Michelle Alexander has noted, a larger share of black Americans are imprisoned than black South Africans were during apartheid. "A human

rights nightmare is occurring on our watch," she has written.

When Americans today look back on the past, many of us wonder how our ancestors could have tolerated blatant injustices — like child labor, Jim Crow or male-only voting — for so long. When future generations look back on our era, I expect they will ask a similar question. They will be outraged that we forcibly confine a couple million of our fellow human beings to cages, often for no good reason.

President Trump and his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, are trying to

make the problem even worse, by locking up ever more people. But Trump and Sessions can't squelch the burgeoning, bipartisan movement for criminal-justice reform. They can't, because as the recent Pulitzer-winning author James Forman Jr. points out, criminal justice happens mostly at the local and state levels. "We should always remember that the fight is going to be at the local level," Forman told NPR's Terry Gross, "and, there, we continue to win."

To take one example, manufactured jailhouse confessions are a common

part of wrongful prosecutions (and are central to the Flowers case). With a shocking frequency, prosecutors and police coax so-called snitches to lie outright about what other prisoners say. In response, Texas enacted a law last year requiring the tracking of snitches and the disclosure of any plea deals to defense attorneys, who can then call the testimony into question in front of a jury. Rebecca Brown of the Innocence Project told me that the Texas law was "excellent" — and that the Illinois legislature had passed an even better version, awaiting the governor's signature.

Elsewhere, some district attorneys are trying to make the system fairer on their own. It's happening in Brooklyn, Chicago, Philadelphia and other cities. Most prosecutors, after all, are decent, ethical public servants. One change involves "open-file" policies, which give the defense attorney access to all of the evidence in a case. That may seem like an obvious step, and it's the norm in civil trials. Yet it remains rare in criminal trials.

I don't want to exaggerate the recent progress. As you read this column, thousands upon thousands of American citizens sit behind bars, unjustly denied their freedom. "Ooooh, I miss Curtis," his devastated father, Archie Flowers, says on the podcast. "Yes, it is rough. Rough, rough, rough, rough."

But the Flowers family refuses to give up hoping for justice. Curtis Flowers's sixth conviction is still being appealed, and new evidence — uncovered by the podcast — seems likely to help that appeal.

If the Flowers family won't give in to despair, nobody else should, either.



Curtis Flowers, left, in Winona, Miss., in 2004, after an unsuccessful motion for a retrial. His story is the subject of a new podcast — the second season of "In the Dark."

OPINION

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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THE RIGHT WAY TO FIX THE PRISONS

What Congress could learn from Mr. Trump's moment of empathy on criminal justice.

President Trump gave a rare display of empathy at a prison-reform meeting at the White House on Friday.

"A friend of mine told me that when people get out of prison, they're all excited. And then they go and they have that stigma; they can't get a job. People don't want to hire them. They can't get that chance," Mr. Trump said. "When we talk about our national program to hire American, this must include helping millions of former inmates get back into the work force as gainfully employed citizens."

Sounds good. Too bad his attorney general is Jeff Sessions, a man who has made a career of opposing meaningful justice reform.

For more than a decade, states of every political hue — from Texas and Louisiana to Connecticut and California — have been overhauling their criminal justice systems, to reverse the effects of decades of harsh and counterproductive policies.

But Congress has watched this revolution from the sidelines, thanks to reactionary lawmakers, including Mr. Sessions when he was in the Senate.

Now two big justice-reform bills are making their way through Congress, and they've scrambled the usual partisan lines.

One bill backed by the White House, known as the First Step Act, would improve some prison conditions and help smooth the path to re-entry for people behind bars. It would, for example, require that inmates be housed within 500 miles of their families, prohibit the brutal but disturbingly common practice of shackling pregnant women and expand rehabilitative programs in which prisoners can participate to earn good-time credits. These are all important and long-overdue fixes to existing law.

But the bill would leave it up to individual prison wardens to decide who gets to use their credits and when, which means inmates would be treated differently based on where they're locked up. The bill also restricts early release to halfway houses, even though as many as 40 percent of people behind bars pose no risk to public safety, according to a study by the Brennan Center for Justice, and would do fine with less intensive oversight, such as electronic monitoring. On top of that, federal halfway houses are so underfunded that even inmates who are eligible for immediate release can't go anywhere, because there aren't enough beds available.

The biggest problem with the First Step Act, however, isn't what's in it; it's what's left out. Specifically, sentencing reform. Harsh sentencing laws passed in the 1980s and 1990s, like mandatory minimums of 10 or 20 years even for low-level drug crimes, have been among the main drivers of the nation's exploding prison population.

Even once-skeptical lawmakers have come to appreciate this fact. Senator Charles Grassley, the Republican chairman of the Judiciary Committee, wrote in an op-ed on Fox News that it was "naïve and unproductive" to focus only on so-called "back-end" reforms like good-time credits, and ignore the punitive sentencing laws that continue to fill the nation's prisons.

Mr. Grassley is sponsoring the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, which would reduce the harshest sentences for nonviolent drug crimes and give judges more discretion to issue lighter sentences. The bill nearly passed Congress in 2016, only to be killed by then-Senator Jeff Sessions.

Mr. Sessions has continued to badmouth sentencing reform as attorney general, leading Mr. Grassley to suggest that if he "wanted to be involved in marking up this legislation, maybe he should have quit his job and run for the Republican Senate seat in Alabama."

Mr. Grassley's bill has the support of top senators of both parties, as well as law-enforcement leaders and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 200 civil-rights organizations. It's not perfect, but it's far preferable to the First Step Act, which could get a vote in the House as soon as this week.

Meanwhile, liberal backers of the First Step Act, like Representative Hakeem Jeffries, the New York Democrat who is sponsoring the bill, argue that it's better than nothing, especially in the current political environment.

He's right. And yet a partial bill could end up being worse than nothing, especially if its benefits don't live up to expectations, and if Congress, which has many other pressing matters to attend to, decides it's had enough of the topic.

The news isn't fake. But it's flawed.



Frank Bruni

On the last Saturday of April, Donald Trump, who doesn't exactly like working on weekends, made a trip to Michigan for a rally. He touted what he saw as the many accomplishments of his administration so far. He railed against all of the injustices that he must endure. And of course he bashed the media.

"These are very dishonest people — many of them," he said, and I must admit: The "many of them" qualifier surprised and gratified me. It was atypically generous of the president. "Fake news," he muttered. "Very dishonest," he groused. "They don't have sources," he insisted. "The sources don't exist."

While he was painting this portrait of us as frivolous and sour, what image were we putting out? That night, at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, journalists swanned into a ballroom as thick with self-regard as any Academy Awards auditorium. They listened to the comedian Michelle Wolf do what she was hired to do: savage Trump and his aides in vicious and occasionally vulgar terms that predictably caused the media's enemies to trumpet that journalists are no more dignified than the president whose indecency they lament.

Then? Many of the journalists who attended the dinner and many who merely observed it from afar freaked out. In the toxic ecosystem of Twitter, they debated whether Wolf had shamed Sarah Huckabee Sanders for her appearance; whether reporters

rising to Sanders's defense were trying to make nice with a source; and on and on. In addition to tweets, there were think pieces, then *more* think pieces. This rocco deconstruction exemplified the very self-absorption that got us into this mess in the first place.

Tim Alberta, who writes for Politico, correctly noted that "every caricature thrust upon the national press — that we are culturally elitist, professionally incestuous, socioeconomically detached and ideologically biased — is confirmed by this train wreck of an event." Kyle Pope, the editor of Columbia Journalism Review, pointed out the inevitability of that train wreck, observing that the event itself is "destined to be either sycophantic, on one extreme, or mean-spirited, on the other. Neither is a good look at a time when trust in media is tenuous."

I want to repeat that: "Neither is a good look at a time when trust in media is tenuous." We were held in low regard by many Americans before Trump came down that escalator. He has been trying with all his might to yank that regard lower ever since.

We're under sustained attack by a shameless president whose contempt for a free press is profound. And regardless of the merits of that attack, our response is pivotal to surviving it and preserving the public's trust.

In many ways, that response — from excavations of links between Trump and Russia to exposés of the workings of Facebook — has been excellent, a perfect illustration of why journalists are so vital. But other aspects of our reaction trouble me. Because Trump is so hyperbolic — and so dishonest — about our vices, we're prone to focusing excessively and even exclusively on our virtues. We sing an immodest aria about them.

In the face of Trump, this newspaper began its "The Truth Is" campaign: "The truth is hard," "The truth is hidden," and so on. The Washington Post put, on the top of its front page, the

legend "Democracy Dies in Darkness." Such approaches are part of what prompted the media critic Jack Shafer to complain that when reporters are maligned, "They go all whiny and preachy."

"I won't dispute that journalists are crucial to a free society," he wrote. But "the chords that aggrieved journalists strike make them sound as entitled as tenured professors."

Pushed up against the ropes, we're so busy self-justifying that we sometimes forget to self-examine. And there are aspects of how we work — and how we come across — that definitely warrant adjustment. We indulge too often in snark for snark's sake, using it not in the service of an essential point but because it's fun and gets attention.

I worry, for example, about a 2016 column about Trump that I had an especially good time with. It posited that his trademark tresses were a

Trump's attacks on us are shameless. Let's not abet them.

Trump's Hair?"

I was trying to cast his coiffure as a metaphor for his inconstancy and obsession with surfaces. But still, I played into a caricature of journalists as smart alecks taking cheap shots from the cheap seats. We have to watch our tone. We really do.

It's impossible to talk about tone without talking about Twitter, so let's. Are we right to spend so much of our time there? Twitter is a powerful tool, a handy delivery system for bulletins, fact checks, links. But too often, we use it as a vanity fair and an ego fortification system. Driven by the dopamine of "likes" and retweets, we jockey to be blitziest or most blistering, snidest or

most sarcastic. These gibes are then used against us. I also believe that the sniping nurtured on Twitter seeps into our interactions elsewhere.

As Damon Linker, a columnist for The Week, put it, "This makes Twitter horrible for our politics and equally bad for journalism."

Meanwhile, more and more of us are yoking ourselves to increasingly narrow ideological and oratorical identities. A particular perspective of ours draws notice. We get bookings — on television, for speeches — based on it. It becomes a brand with financial rewards. Press this button and get this argument. We're economically welded to it. And as it grows more fixed, we appear less genuine.

We're also served poorly by an occasionally reflexive pessimism bereft of adequate nuance or a sufficient sense of triage. Don't hear me wrong: If Trump's press is overwhelmingly negative, that's because he has earned it. But we sometimes go too hard on lesser actors and episodes, potentially sacrificing the credibility and authority that we need for more galling moments.

One bit of recent press coverage raked Mick Mulvaney, a former congressman who is now the White House budget director, over the coals for saying: "We had a hierarchy in my office in Congress. If you're a lobbyist who never gave us money, I didn't talk to you. If you're a lobbyist who gave us money, I might talk to you."

But some of these accounts omitted or played down what he said next: "If you came from back home and sat in my lobby, I talked to you without exception, regardless of the financial contributions." And few forthrightly acknowledged that this is common behavior among Democrats, too. What Mulvaney copped to didn't put him in a league with, say, Scott Pruitt. Let's reserve our maximum outrage for him.

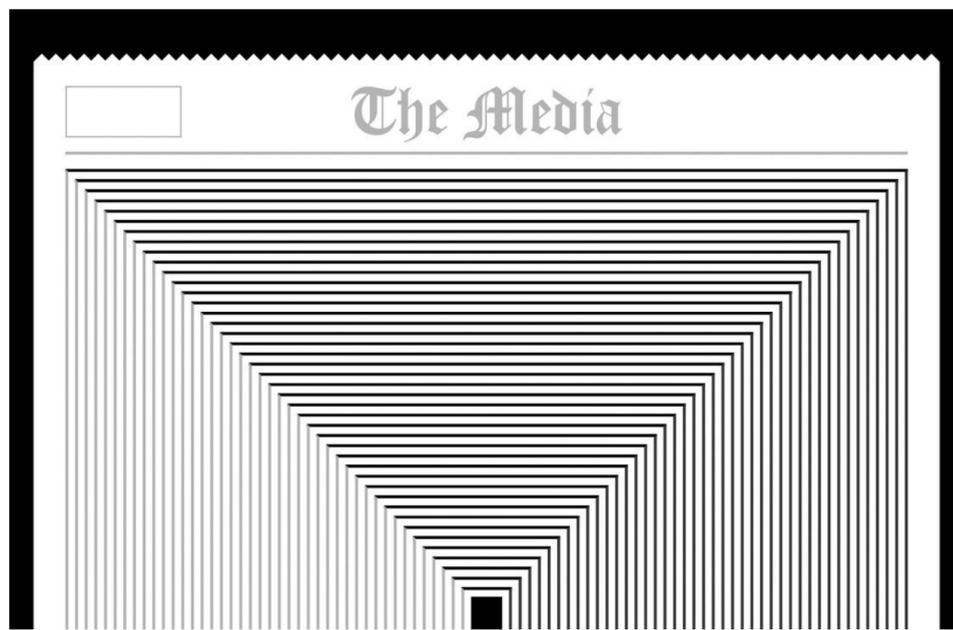
There's plenty in the Trump administration to excoriate without any gratuitous huffing and puffing. Overreach and exaggeration are his stocks in trade; let's not make them ours.

One of my overarching fears about the Trump era is that he'll drag the rest of the country, including the media, down to his level. There's little he'd love more than to invalidate us, because then he could sell whatever alternative facts and ornate fantasies that he chose to. That's a chilling prospect, and that's why we can't inadvertently abet his cause.

It's easy to be lulled into a false security by the "Trump bump" in business for many newspapers and networks, whose fans are more passionately engaged than before. But that bump may not last forever, and it doesn't do away with the misgivings that a majority of Americans have about us.

It's also easy to be so fixated on the ludicrousness of some of the charges that the president hurls at us that we fail to improve in ways that he's not discussing. The news that we report is real. But so is the need to be even better at reporting it.

This is a condensed version of the 2018 Hays Press-Enterprise Lecture, delivered at the University of California, Riverside, on Friday.



BEN WISEMAN

Monarchs in my garden, at last

Margaret Renkl
Contributing Writer

NASHVILLE I was pretty proud of myself the spring I planted my first organic garden. It was the mid-1980s, and I was a first-year graduate student in creative writing, a program unrelated to horticultural mastery. But I had taken a college course in environmental biology, and I knew the basics: The more chemicals you use in a garden, the more chemicals you'll need in the garden. It's a self-perpetuating cycle, more reliable than the seasons.

At my house, companion planting — marigolds in between the broccoli, tomato vines encircling the spinach — would repel bugs the natural way. Any lingering pests would be dispatched by beneficial insects like ladybugs and praying mantises. I watched happily as cabbage white butterflies flitted over silvery broccoli leaves. Those little white butterflies pausing in the gloaming on the water-beaded broccoli made for a tableau of bucolic harmony.

It didn't dawn on me that a) all the flitting cabbage white butterflies were carrying out the usual biological imperative of springtime, b) broccoli belongs to the cabbage family, and c) the butterfly's name references not only its color but also its host plant. I was raising cabbage white butterflies, it turns out, not broccoli.

In time, I gave up trying to sort the damaging insects from the beneficial ones and started planting enough vege-

tables for both of us. Nearly three decades later, I gave up raising vegetables altogether. I was always rooting for the butterflies anyway, even before I read about the plight of the pollinators.

So four years ago, I pulled out the vestiges of my vegetable plants and put a pollinator garden in their place. It's still an organic garden, even though my family isn't eating what it produces, because chemicals are deadly to pollinators. Now my raised beds are full of native perennials that provide nectar for bees, wasps, skippers and butterflies, or serve as their nurseries: yarrow for painted lady butterflies, dill and parsley for black swallowtails, false indigo for southern dogface butterflies, loads and loads of white clover for the honeybees. The wasps and native bumblebees are gloriously busy in all of them.

Most of all, I planted as many varieties of native milkweed as my garden could hold — common milkweed and butterfly weed and swamp milkweed and purple milkweed — because milkweed is the host plant of the monarch butterfly, and in this age of Roundup-ready crops, the monarch butterfly is in danger of extinction. In a contest for garden space, the head of broccoli I can buy at the grocery store for \$1.99 a pound carries no weight against the mass extinction of an irreplaceable butterfly that can fly for thousands of miles and was once so numerous it filled the skies with gold. This year the monarch's numbers were 30 percent lower than last year's, and last year's numbers were disastrous.

But no matter how many milkweed

seedlings I set out from one year to the next, no gravid monarch female ever arrived to lay eggs on them. Last year I decided to jump-start the whole process with mail-order caterpillars, but I had no better luck with them than with the mail-order ladybugs and praying mantises of decades ago, though for different reasons. The alien praying mantises thrived even if they didn't save my broccoli plants, and all my mail-order caterpillars died before they became

Planting specifically to attract pollinators — bees, skippers and butterflies — has finally paid off.

"You want to cut down a 70-year-old tree so you can plant a field of weeds?" he said.

Finally, I decided to take the same approach to my pollinator garden I had once adopted for my vegetables: I watered and I weeded, after a fashion, but mostly I let it go its own way. Any number of things might have killed those caterpillars. The beneficial tachinid flies that keep the larvae of cabbage white butterflies under control on broccoli plants are deadly to monarch larvae too.

The beneficial lacewings that eat the aphids that eat squash and cucumbers

are just as voracious for monarch caterpillars. Everything you touch in nature touches everything else. Even when you're determined to do things right, there's only so much you can control, and it's not very much at all.

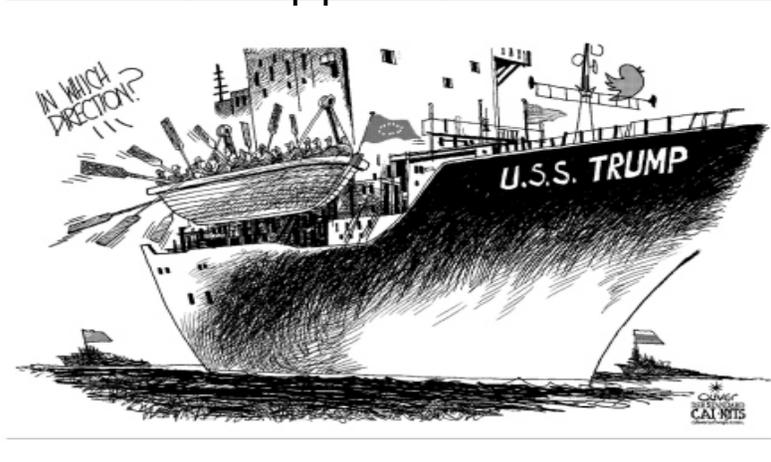
This year, the perennial milkweed came up right on schedule. I was reading a book on the back deck Sunday afternoon two weeks ago when a flash of orange in the pollinator garden caught my eye. From a distance it could be mistaken for a monarch.

But of course it wasn't a monarch. No way. Four years of roundly rejected milkweed had taught me my lesson.

Still, could it be? I walked over to take a look. And there, lifting herself barely above the green leaves of the milkweed, was a female monarch, pale and tattered, looking as though she had come a great distance. She was fluttering from plant to plant, completely ignoring the nectar-filled flowers and pausing, just lightly, on one milkweed leaf after another. When I looked closely, I could see she was laying eggs.

Five days later, the eggs hatched. It took a magnifying glass to be sure, but there they were: on each leaf an infinitesimal creature with tiny black-and-yellow stripes and tiny black faces and tiny black waving antennae. By the time I found them, they were already eating, leaving behind pinprick-size holes in the leaves. The milkweed leaves I had planted just for them.

MARGARET RENKL writes about flora, fauna, politics and culture in the American South.



How history ignores the bad refugees

NGUYEN, FROM PAGE 1
 "model minority" who believe they earned their success, relying on little or no government assistance. They are not so different from Mr. Kelly, the descendant of Irish and Italian immigrants who included unskilled laborers speaking little English. Convenient amnesia about one's origins is an all-American trait, since we believe ourselves to be the country in which everyone gets a new beginning.

What some of us also forget is that at nearly every stage of our country's history, the people who were already established as American citizens found convenient targets to designate as unable to assimilate: the indigenous peoples; conquered Mexicans; slaves; or the newest immigrants, who were usually classified as nonwhite.

In 1751, even before the country was founded, Benjamin Franklin wrote that "perhaps I am partial to the complexion of my country, for such kind of partiality is natural to mankind." He favored "the English" and "white people," and did not want Pennsylvania to become a "colony of aliens," who "will never adopt our language or customs, any more than they can acquire our complexion." He was speaking of the Germans.

German-Americans are now "white," which is partly a color, partly a state of mind and partly a matter of perception. The eventual whiteness of German-Americans saved them from being thrown en masse into internment camps during World War II, unlike Japanese-Americans. With historical lessons like that, it's no sur-

prise that some Vietnamese-Americans desire to put their refugee past behind them, including the memory of how only 36 percent of Americans wanted to accept Vietnamese refugees in 1975.

A choice, then, exists for every immigrant and refugee, and their descendants. Mr. Kelly and some Vietnamese-Americans have chosen to forget their past or to recast it with themselves and their families as heroic, self-reliant Americans who are better than the newest and most threatening immigrant or refugee. By forgetting the past, these Americans repeat what has been there since our country's beginning — the perpetually renewing fear of someone darker, someone different.

I prefer to remember my mother's heroism and how it began before she ever became an American citizen and changed her name to Linda. She was born Bay, or Seven, at a time when Vietnamese people sometimes had so many children that it was easier to give them numbers instead of names. Along with my father, who had a high school education, she lifted herself from rural poverty and became a successful businesswoman by taking significant risks, the first one being when they left North Vietnam for South Vietnam in 1954. They lost nearly everything when they took the biggest risk of all and fled as refugees

to the United States in 1975.

By the time I observed her reading aloud to herself, a dozen years after her American beginning, my mother was once again a successful businesswoman. She had already been shot once at her store, which I did not witness, and had a thief point a gun in her face in her own home, which I did witness.

She did not speak fluent English, but she did well enough to contribute more in taxes than many Americans. She was and is heroic, but many Americans would see her only as an outsider, including the one who put a sign in a shop window near my parents' grocery store in San Jose: "Another American driven out of business by the Vietnamese."

Because of what she made possible by giving me an education and a home, I could have become a forgetful American, eager to be accepted by other Americans, ready to show my Americanness by keeping people like my parents out of the country. But I felt myself to be one of those Vietnamese-Americans — and there are many of us — who never wanted to forget that we should stand with immigrants and refugees, with the poor and the unemployed, with people very much like my mother.

My mother needed neither my pity nor my shame. Just my compassion and respect.

VIET THANH NGUYEN is the author, most recently, of "The Refugees," and the editor of "The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives."

A.I. is harder than you think

**Gary Marcus
Ernest Davis**

The field of artificial intelligence doesn't lack for ambition. In January, Google's chief executive, Sundar Pichai, claimed in an interview that A.I. "is more profound than, I dunno, electricity or fire."

Day-to-day developments, though, are more mundane. Last week, Mr. Pichai stood onstage in front of a cheering audience and proudly showed a video in which a new Google program, Google Duplex, made a phone call and scheduled a hair salon appointment.

The program performed those tasks well enough that a human at the other end of the call didn't suspect she was talking to a computer.

Assuming the demonstration is legitimate, that's an impressive (if somewhat creepy) accomplishment. But Google Duplex is not the advance toward meaningful A.I. that many people seem to think.

If you read Google's public statement about Google Duplex, you'll discover that the initial scope of the project is surprisingly limited. It encompasses just three tasks: helping users "make restaurant reservations, schedule hair salon appointments, and get holiday hours."

Schedule hair salon appointments? The dream of artificial intelligence was supposed to be grander than this — to help revolutionize medicine, say, or to produce trustworthy robot helpers for the home.

The reason Google Duplex is so narrow in scope isn't that it represents a small but important first step toward such goals. The reason is that the field of A.I. doesn't yet have a clue how to do any better.

As Google concedes, the trick to making Google Duplex work was to limit it to "closed domains," or highly constrained types of data (like conversations about making hair salon appointments), "which are narrow enough to explore extensively." Google Duplex can have a human-sounding conversation only "after being deeply trained in such domains." Open-ended conversation on a wide range of topics

is nowhere in sight.

The limitations of Google Duplex are not just a result of its being announced prematurely and with too much fanfare; they are also a vivid reminder that genuine A.I. is far beyond the field's current capabilities, even at a company with perhaps the largest collection of A.I. researchers in the world, vast amounts of computing power and enormous quantities of data.

The crux of the problem is that the field of artificial intelligence has not come to grips with the infinite complexity of language. Just as you can make infinitely many arithmetic equations by combining a few mathematical symbols and following a small set of rules, you can make infinitely many sentences by combining a modest set of words and a modest set of rules. A genuine, human-level A.I. will need to be able to cope with all of those possible sentences, not just a small fragment of them.

The narrower the scope of a conversation, the easier it is to have. If your interlocutor is more or less following a script, it is not hard to build a computer program that, with the help of simple phrase-book-like templates, can recognize a few variations on a theme. ("What time does your establishment close?" "I would like a reservation for four people at 7 p.m.")

But mastering a Berlitz phrase book doesn't make you a fluent speaker of a foreign language. Sooner or later the non sequiturs start flowing.

Even in a closed domain like restaurant reservations, unusual circumstances are bound to come up. ("Unfortunately, we are redecorating the restaurant that week.") A good computer programmer can dodge many of these bullets by inducing an interlocutor to rephrase. ("I'm sorry, did you say you were closed that week?") In short stylized conversations, that may suffice. But in open-ended conversations about complex issues, such hedges will eventually get irritating, if not outright baffling.

To be fair, Google Duplex doesn't

literally use phrase-book-like templates. It uses "machine learning" techniques to extract a range of possible phrases drawn from an enormous data set of recordings of human conversations. But the basic problem remains the same: No matter how much data you have and how many patterns you discern, your data will never match the creativity of human beings or the fluidity of the real world. The universe of possible sentences is too complex. There is no end to the variety of life — or to the ways in which we can talk about that variety.

So what should the field of artificial intelligence do instead? Once upon a time, before the fashionable rise of machine learning and "big data," A.I. researchers tried to understand how complex knowledge could be encoded and processed in computers.

This project, known as knowledge engineering, aimed not to create programs that would detect statistical patterns in huge data sets but to formalize, in a system of rules, the fundamental elements of human understanding, so that those rules could be applied in computer programs. Rather than merely imitating the results of our thinking, machines would actually share some of our core cognitive abilities.

That job proved difficult and was never finished. But "difficult and unfinished" doesn't mean misguided. A.I. researchers need to return to that project sooner rather than later, ideally enlisting the help of cognitive psychologists who study the question of how human cognition manages to be endlessly flexible.

Today's dominant approach to A.I. has not worked out. Yes, some remarkable applications have been built from it, including Google Translate and Google Duplex.

But the limitations of these applications as a form of intelligence should be a wake-up call. If machine learning and big data can't get us any further than a restaurant reservation, even in the hands of the world's most capable A.I. company, it is time to reconsider that strategy.

GARY MARCUS is a professor of psychology and neural science and ERNEST DAVIS is a professor of computer science, both at New York University.

Under the warm concern of the party

LIAM, FROM PAGE 5
 father of Mr. Yang's young wife, who said that his daughter's "sacrifice" had been "a virtue and a glory."

News of Mr. Yang's reversion to Chinese citizenship reverberated across the Chinese-American community, especially among scientists and engineers. The C.P.P.C.C. gained much-needed respectability, having just poached a major human-capital asset of the United States, and one who had received most of his training there.

In fact, ever since the California Institute of Technology aerodynamics and missile expert Tsien Hsue-shen returned to China in 1955 — and became instrumental in building China's missile industry — the F.B.I. has been well aware of the danger this peculiar kind of reverse brain drain poses for the United States. "I'd rather see him shot than let him go," Dan A. Kimball, the secretary of the Navy in 1951-53, reportedly once said of Mr. Tsien. "He's worth three to five divisions anyplace." Hundreds of Chinese scientists overseas went back to China in the 1950s.

Mr. Yang's renunciation of his American citizenship may have had an even greater effect, if only because there are many more Chinese-Americans in the United States today than there were some six decades ago. Certainly, his return to China in the 1970s was a great source of patriotic inspiration among my generation of Chinese studying and working in high-tech in the United States then. Again and again, such homecoming stories have helped repair the C.C.P.'s tarnished image after it lost the support of intellectuals — with its disastrous Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 or again after the brutal Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

Longtime China observers readily recognize in Mr. Yang's trajectory the handiwork of the C.C.P., specifically the painstaking orchestrations of its well-masked machine of influence. Foreign academic and intelligence circles, however, are only just beginning to appreciate China's method — and how it differs from, say, Russia's — and to take the full measure of its effectiveness. China's ploys are difficult to discern, and its plants are difficult to dislodge, especially when they take root in unsuspecting open societies, like the United States, New Zealand or Australia.

The Chinese influence machine has nebulous outer layers, partly because connections between its members, be they individuals or organizations, are often imperceptible. But at its core is a



The physicist Chen Ning Yang in 1963.

well-defined, battle-tested structure first deployed by Mao in the 1930s. Mao famously identified it as one of his Three Magic Weapons against the Republican government of Chiang Kai-shek, alongside a Leninist party and the Red Army, and he gave it a respectable name: the United Front. The organization assumed its current form in 1946. Three years later, Mao's Communists won the civil war, and credited the United Front in part for their victory.

The United Front comprises two organs, which are often poorly understood outside China because there are no equivalents for them in the West. One is the enigmatic United Front Work Department; the other is the high-profile Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (C.P.P.C.C.).

The United Front Work Department is a nimble and tightly led party organ, headed by the chief of the secretariat of the C.C.P.'s central committee. It oversees a dozen organizations that do political networking, through both persuasion and infiltration. One of those is the European and American Alumni Association, which keeps close tabs over the ever-larger number of Chinese students and academics training or residing in the West, and enjoins them to conduct "people diplomacy" — in effect turning all those scholars into foot soldiers for the United Front.

The C.P.P.C.C., on the other hand, is a sort of vast invitation-only club — led by a member of the standing committee of the party's Politburo, working primarily through personal networks.

During its annual meeting, it is one harmonious gabfest of 2,150-odd participants. About 40 percent of them are C.C.P. members; the rest are people of renown from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau carefully selected for their wealth, popularity and political pliability — like movie stars, religious leaders, business tycoons and university presidents. (At least that goes for the C.P.P.C.C. at the national level; lesser patriots start by joining provincial or lower-level offshoots and work their way up.)

C.P.P.C.C. members nominally are political consultants to the C.C.P.; in fact, they must toe the party line. And their real job begins when the show talk ends: It mainly consists of influencing other important people in their respective walks of life and eventually drawing them into Beijing's orbit — with money, women, the promise of fame or simply by tapping their patriotism. Any recruits are given good opportunities in China: to perform, proselytize, invest or make a lot of money.

In some ways, the C.P.P.C.C. operates like a mafia: It is secretive, relies on close personal ties and stands ready to break the law. It is also something of a political Ponzi scheme: Its members are rewarded when they entice others to become initiates — only then to come under more pressure to do even more. Patrick Ho Chi-ping, a former home affairs secretary of Hong Kong and the head of an energy nonprofit, now finds himself embroiled in a criminal case in the United States, accused of bribing African heads of states to secure oil contracts for Chinese energy interests controlled by the state. A veteran of the C.P.P.C.C., he appears to have been done in by those connections.

Yet China's influence machine purred on. Earlier this year the Chinese authorities in Beijing allocated to Hong Kong a record 200-plus seats in the current C.P.P.C.C., about 10 percent of the entire membership even though the city's population is the equivalent of only 0.5 percent of China's total.

Seven decades ago, Mao's United Front was instrumental in catapulting the Chinese Communists to power. Since then, China's influence machine has become infinitely more resourceful — and far more global.

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Culture

How Han Solo came to be

MOVIE REVIEW

The latest installment of the 'Star Wars' saga goes into many questions

BY A.O. SCOTT

"This was never about you," someone says to Han Solo, which is odd since the movie is called "Solo." I don't want to make this about me, but there are a lot of questions that, in the 41 years since I saw the first "Star Wars" movie — fine! the fourth one; "A New Hope"; jeez! — it has never occurred to me to ask. Where did Han Solo get his last name? How did he and Chewbacca meet? What was the winning hand in the game of Sabacc that gave him possession of the Millennium Falcon? How exactly did he make the Kessel run in less than 12 parsecs?

"Solo: A Star Wars Story" answers all of these questions and more. This isn't a bad thing, but it makes this episode, directed by Ron Howard from a screenplay by Jonathan Kasdan and Lawrence Kasdan, a curiously low-stakes blockbuster, in effect a filmed Wikipedia page. (The film played at the Cannes Film Festival last week; it opens worldwide this week.)

Before he returned as an avenging patriarch in "The Force Awakens," Han Solo was the cool uncle of the "Star Wars" saga. You knew the guy had a lot of crazy stories to tell about gamblers, smugglers and other wild char-



JONATHAN OLLEY/LUCASFILM, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Clockwise from top: Aldan Ehrenreich, foreground, as Han Solo and Joonas Suotamo as Chewbacca in "Solo: A Star Wars Story"; Mr. Ehrenreich with Emilia Clarke as his love interest, Qi'ra; and Donald Glover as Lando Calrissian.

acters he hung around with before he joined the Rebellion, but somehow you never got around to hearing them all. Maybe that was for the best, but on the other hand, why not set him up with a ghostwriter and a vanity press and let the yarns rip?

Because then you might discover

that he wasn't quite as interesting as you had thought. Young Han, played by a hard-working, slightly lost-looking Aldan Ehrenreich, is introduced as a juvenile delinquent on a dark, rough planet called Corellia, hot-wiring cars and making out with his girlfriend, Qi'ra (Emilia Clarke). The opening

scenes carry a faint whiff of the burning rubber, gasoline and adolescent hormones of "American Graffiti," the 1973 car-crazy coming-of-age picture directed by George Lucas and starring Mr. Howard (with a young Harrison Ford as well).

Han is fresh-faced and earnest, a

long way from the grizzled, Humphrey Bogart-ish cynicism of "A New Hope." He and Qi'ra, indentured to a giant centipede with Linda Hunt's voice, start running like figures in a Springsteen song — we gotta get out while we're young! — only to find their dreams of escape dashed by the Em-

pire and a criminal syndicate called Crimson Dawn. Han signs up for military service and then deserts. Qi'ra takes a job with a nasty gangster named Dryden Vos (Paul Bettany), and the erstwhile lovebirds meet again in his penthouse, where Han, now part of a band of freelance thieves (led by

Charlie Puth got famous — and then good

BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF.

After some early missteps, the singer-songwriter has an exceptional new album

BY JON CARAMANICA

In the modernist home here where Charlie Puth has lived since December, an Aston Martin sits in the garage, the ceilings are tropical-forest tall, the living room is sunken, with leather couches, and the toilets raise their lids to greet you.

On a Sunday earlier this month, it was midafternoon and Mr. Puth hadn't eaten yet, but he was in his modest home studio, with its racks of vintage synthesizers, working out some new ideas with the songwriter Johan Carlsson. He hopped on a keyboard with a distinct early-1990s vibe, gooeey and a little cold, and began playing snippets of older songs: Toto's "Africa," Ol' Dirty Bastard's "Got Your Money," SWV's "Weak." He hit upon a sound that made him happy — "like mixing Jodeci with Tears for Fears," he said.

It was a few days before the release of "Voicenotes," his second album, and the first one not quickly microwaved to completion in the immediate aftermath of an out-of-nowhere megahit. In 2015, Mr. Puth was an up-and-coming songwriter when he rocketed into the pop troposphere with the Wiz Khalifa collaboration "See You Again," a moist lump of treacle from the "Furious 7" soundtrack. Other big hits followed, but none felt quite right to him.

"I was trying to figure out who I was musically in front of millions of people," he said, seated by the pool in the back of his house. He wore a Puff Daddy T-shirt tattered with attitude, yellow Adidas sweatpants and chunky Alexander Mc-

Queen sneakers. His hair was flamboyantly shaggy, as if a clean swoop had hit a wind tunnel.

"Voicenotes" is a confident, impressive pop album, with ironclad melodies and frisky takes on 1980s funk and 1990s soul. It turns out that Mr. Puth is not the maudlin crooner who entered the spotlight, but rather a sophisticated pop marksman with a gift for spare, pointed arrangements — he produced almost the whole album himself — and detailed, vulnerable lyrics. He gets wronged by an older woman on "Boy," and "LA Girls" is about how a whole city, and everyone in it, can break your heart. On "If You Leave Me Now," he duets with Boyz II Men, and on "Change," with James Taylor. His falsetto, on "How Long," "Somebody Told Me" and more, is appealingly supple. All in all, it makes for one of the boldest pop albums of the year.

Getting there was not easy, though. For Mr. Puth, 26, the couple of years following "See You Again" were a juxtaposition of intense public success and equally intense private struggle. "A little bit of success, you think that I would be over the moon," he said, "but quietly, it was really hard for me."

He had several smash singles, including the treacle 2.0 of "One Call Away" and the sensuous Selena Gomez duet "We Don't Talk Anymore," and his debut album, "Nine Track Mind," went platinum. But it was rushed: "For the most part, it was just filler," he said. Decisions were happening rapidly. In a particularly cruel example of record label alchemy, a version of his song "One Call Away" was released featuring the Mexican starlet Sofia Reyes, the ur-country gentleman Brett Eldredge and the salacious R&B crooner Ty Dolla Sign. (Yes, that is a real song.)

And for someone who grapples with anxiety issues, being suddenly thrust into the spotlight was disorienting. "I'm already a very in-my-head anxious per-



JAKE MICHAELS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Charlie Puth, 26, shot to fame with a 2015 Wiz Khalifa collaboration, "See You Again."

son," he said. "I don't really do well when I'm alone a lot because I'm alone with my thoughts, which is not good. It gets very freaky. The big misconception is when you get more famous, you have more friends. I find that I'm alone more than ever now."

He cried on Norwegian television. At a concert in Dallas, while singing "We Don't Talk Anymore," he cursed out Justin Bieber (Ms. Gomez's ex) in absentia, prompting love triangle speculation. He flirted with two married "Access Hollywood" hosts. ("The Puthinator

came out to play," quipped the Australian gossip site Dolly). He was captured by paparazzi with the Hollywood wild-child Bella Thorne on a Miami beach, and then, after she posted a picture with her ex, melted down on Twitter just a few days later.

"He was put into a very difficult position 'cause the song ['See You Again'] was bigger than he was," said Kara DioGuardi, the hit songwriter and onetime "American Idol" judge who taught Mr. Puth songwriting at Berklee College of Music in Boston. "I don't think he was

prepared for that."

Usually it takes pop stars decades to recant their ways and lament the falsity of fame; for Mr. Puth, it took about 18 months. "I can't pretend that I can go on being that guy when I truly, truly wasn't," he said. "I'm the nerdy musician who likes to make mixtapes for girls in seventh grade. Now I'm just older, and I'm still doing that."

By the time of the Jingle Ball at Madison Square Garden in New York at the end of 2016, he'd begun to unravel a bit. At the show, he was beating his piano like a drum kit and jerking his body theatrically like the Incredible Hulk breaking out of Bruce Banner's square slacks. A few months later came "Attention," the slick, lithe, panting funk vamp that announced Mr. Puth's rebirth. It snarled, full of resentment about a woman attaching herself to Mr. Puth for the wrong reasons.

He now wonders if, during his brief flirtation with public life, his high-profile romances were more transactional than they felt in the moment. "I think I got — I'm trying to say this in the right way so I don't get in trouble — it was more about the idea of me than actually wanting to be with me," he said, "and I got that confused with actual love and romanticism."

For all his success, there is something still tender about Mr. Puth. He carries himself softly, behaves considerately. In school, he was an eager student. "Driven, driven, driven," Ms. DioGuardi said. "Always ready to answer a question, expound on why he thought something was good or bad. He stood out. He was quirky and funny." When he talks about the work Babyface did on TLC's "CrazySexyCool," he notes how the intro is in B minor and then the next song, "Creep," shifts to C minor. During the interview, when he heard a bird chirping in his backyard, he squawked back, "B flat!"

He learned piano from his mother and commuted from New Jersey to the Man-

hattan School of Music before heading to college at Berklee. During high school, he wrote jingles for YouTube stars, and later, in college, was briefly signed to Ellen DeGeneres's record label after a YouTube cover he did — a duet version of Adele's "Someone Like You" — took off in 2011. When "See You Again" became a smash, he was making his way as a behind-the-scenes force: Lil Wayne's "Nothing But Trouble" began as Mr. Puth's song lamenting Instagram models; he wrote Trey Songz's "Slow Motion"; and he produced "Broke," a madcap collaboration by Keith Urban, Jason Derulo and Stevie Wonder. (Again, yes, a real song.)

But even though he's been working at becoming famous for so long, he's still growing into his pop star presence.

There was a brief flicker of the 2015-16 Puth around the release of "Attention." He went on "The Voice" to perform the song, in a tight red shirt, surrounded by flexible female dancers. The "Voice" judge and Puth's new friend Adam Levine texted him afterward that he felt the performance wasn't a true reflection of his artistry.

Mr. Levine was right. "It was fake," Mr. Puth said. "It was an invention in my mind, a hypothetical that would work." The next time he performed the song on television, he stripped it down with the Roots on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon."

"You can have a career like Bruno Mars and not be seen everywhere," Mr. Puth said. "I'm getting back my tortoise shell."

And doing so is maybe allowing him to put his heart on the line again. In the studio with Mr. Carlsson, instead of getting mired in the skepticism and frustration that define "Voicenotes," he was writing about how a new crush tingles:

*I lose the way
Those letters feel
When I write your name in my phone
Write your name in my phone, babe*

It doesn't take itself too seriously, but it also holds whatever irreverent, anarchic impulses it might possess in careful check. Some fans may blame Mr. Howard for this, and fantasize about what might have been if Christopher Miller and Phil Lord, the "Lego Movie" auteurs, originally hired to direct, had been allowed to see the project through. But this galaxy has always been a rule-bound place, and too much divergence from franchise traditions would probably have stirred up its own kind of fan outrage.

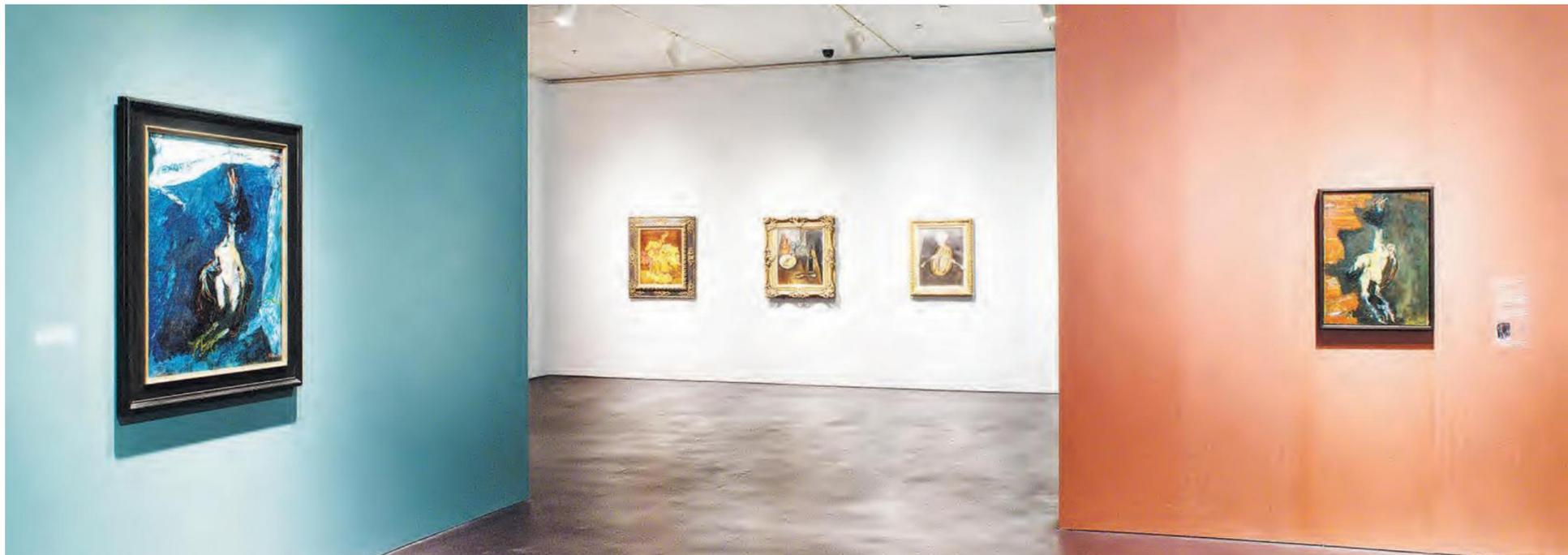
There's no reason to be mad. There are some fine action sequences, and some that don't make much sense at all. There are a handful of secondary characters who come close to upstaging the hero, including Beckett's companion, Val (Thandie Newton); a radical droid called L3-37 (Phoebe Waller-Bridge); and Lando Calrissian (Donald Glover), the original owner of the Millennium Falcon, Han's sometime rival and secret ego ideal. And of course Chewbacca (Joonas Suotamo).

He meets Han in a mud pit, by the way. For the other answers, you'll have to see for yourself. But one thing that remains curiously unexplored is how Han became the wary, cynical guy Princess Leia (and everyone else) fell for back during the Carter administration. It's not really Mr. Ehrenreich's fault that he doesn't evoke Mr. Ford. (Though the idea of Mr. Glover aging into Billy Dee Williams creates a magical loop in the pop-cultural spacetime continuum.) It's more that the time line can't quite adjust. Guys like the old Han Solo belong to the past. We're all supposed to be much nicer now.

Journalism can be an intense business.

Journalism can be an intense business.

CULTURE



An installation view of "Chaim Soutine: Flesh," an exhibition of more than 30 paintings at New York's Jewish Museum through Sept. 16, that demonstrates the peculiarities of the artist's style.

Steeped in blood, but reveling in life

ART REVIEW

Ecstatic, gory still lifes by Chaim Soutine find the spiritual in the physical

BY WILL HEINRICH

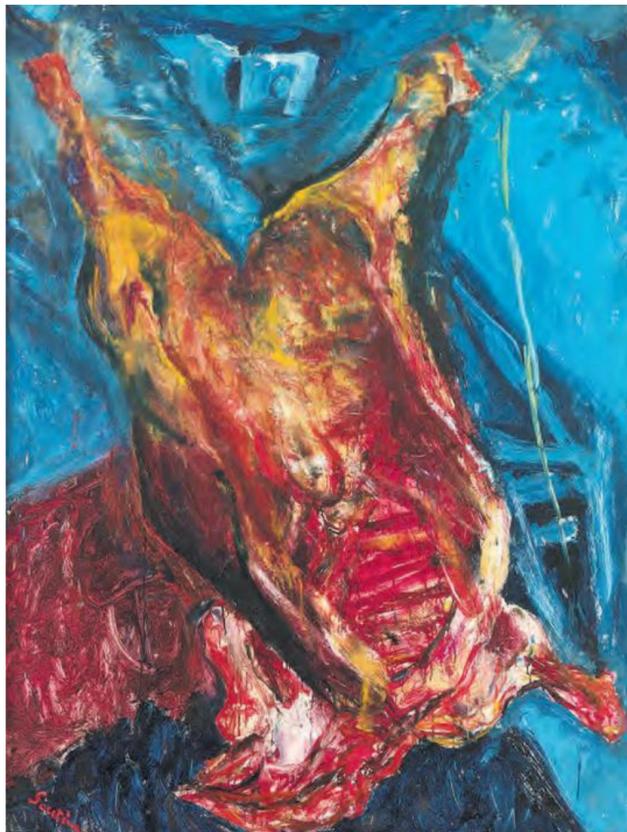
The most well-known story about Chaim Soutine has him alarming his Montparnasse neighbors by bringing in fresh sides of beef to paint, and dousing the carcasses, as he turned out one gory, ecstatic still life after another, with blood to keep them fresh.

Born outside Minsk, in what is now Belarus, Soutine (1893-1943) arrived in Paris in 1913. There he endured almost a decade of struggle before finding a few patrons, most notably Albert C. Barnes, the great Philadelphia collector, who catapulted Soutine to fame and fortune when he bought every canvas in the painter's studio in 1922.

The blood story, dating to the mid-1920s, may or may not be true. Hardworking but unworldly, Soutine made things difficult for historians by destroying his own paintings when he didn't like them, leaving others unsigned and never keeping a diary. But the anecdote captures an essential truth about Soutine's interest in his most famous subject matter: It wasn't about accuracy of colors, or whatever stories he himself told about the kosher butchers of his childhood, or a fixation on death. It was about using his brush as a scalpel to reveal the immaterial force of the material world.

The centerpiece of "Chaim Soutine: Flesh," an exhibition of more than 30 paintings at New York's Jewish Museum through Sept. 16, is a stupendous example, his "Carcass of Beef" (circa 1925), from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, N.Y. But to lead to it, the curator Stephen Brown, in consultation with the Soutine scholars Esti Dunow and Maurice Tuchman, has assembled a well-paced procession of other still lifes that demonstrate the peculiarities of Soutine's style: naked fowl; silver herring; a giant ray fish, inspired by Chardin; and explosive bursts of pooped sardines.

"Still Life With Artichoke" (circa 1916) shows a simple, if oddly asymmetrical, place setting in which all the objects seem alive. The fork bends gently, like a wrist; two lemons press impatiently against the lip of a plate;



CHAIM SOUTINE. ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP PARIS; PRIVATE COLLECTION; ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY, BUFFALO, VIA THE JEWISH MUSEUM

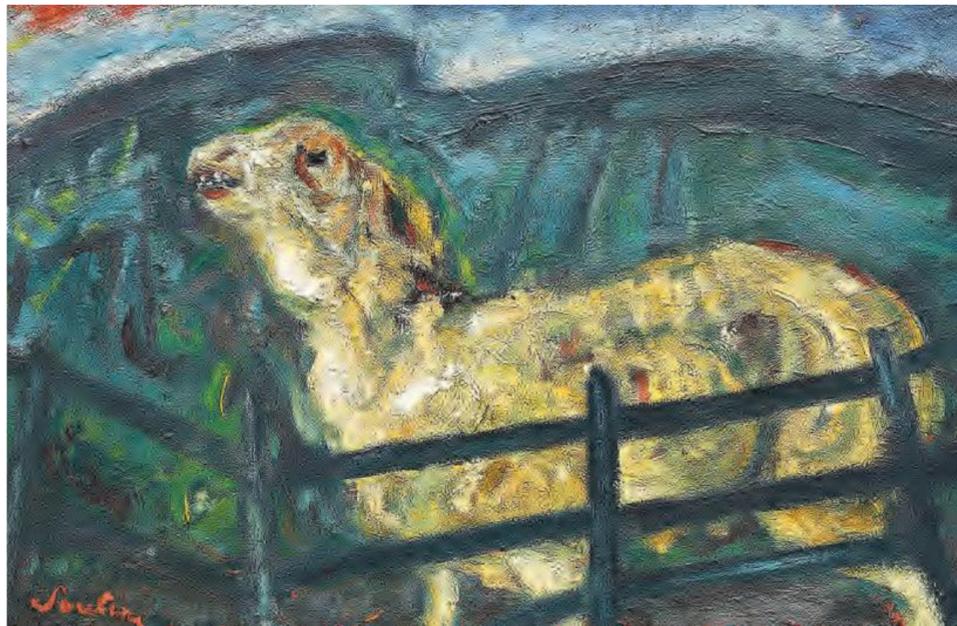
the long-stemmed artichoke lies like an exhausted lover.

The painting is also an unusually easy-to-read example of Soutine's distinctive perspectival wobble. In later paintings, lines seem so far askew that if you stand too close, you may think you're looking at a world deranged. But here, the distortion is gentler. Even from inches away, you can see how it ties the whole scene into a single, expressive gesture, giving it almost as much motion and continuity as a glimpse of real life.

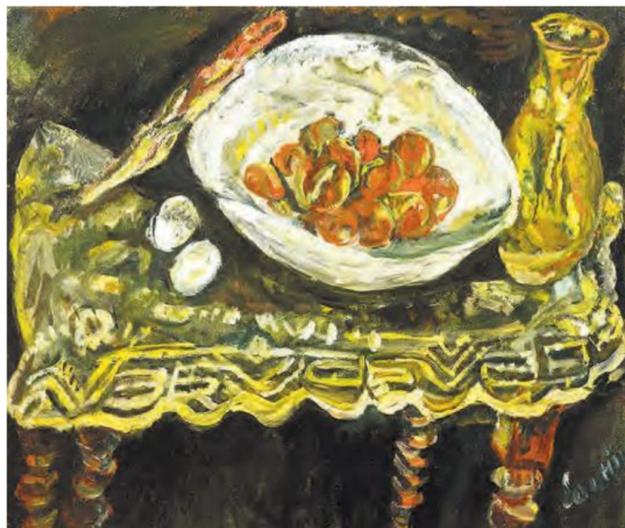
In other paintings, a few partially plucked, not necessarily dead chickens exemplify Soutine's talent for finding action in stillness and wringing spiritual meaning out of physical facts: Ruffs of black feathers, swinging side-

ways on their yellow necks, stand in for the annihilating strokes of a butcher's ax. Two turkeys, one a stormy froth of yellow and orange, the other a feathery spattering of dashes and drips, anticipate Abstract Expressionism. And in "Side of Beef With a Calf's Head" (circa 1923), broad, patchwork strokes of red, white and green give an abstracted but vivid sense of the complicated harmony of a living body.

Then you get to the mountaintop and meet "Carcass of Beef." Here, a glistening scarlet carcass, streaked with orange fat and sliced open to reveal a skeletal Jacob's ladder of parallel lines, seems to tumble out of the canvas, one thigh cocked as if it were kicking itself up into a headstand. An abstract blue background, speckled with white and



CHAIM SOUTINE. ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP PARIS; PRIVATE COLLECTION, VIA THE JEWISH MUSEUM



CHAIM SOUTINE. ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/ADAGP PARIS; REGINART COLLECTIONS, VIA THE JEWISH MUSEUM

Clockwise from upper right: "Sheep Behind a Fence," circa 1940, painted while Soutine was in hiding from the Nazis in France; "Still Life With Fruit," 1919; and "Carcass of Beef," circa 1925.

marked, on the right side, by a framework of thick strokes that echoes the body's exposed rib cage, does more than throw the figure forward by contrast. By evoking a starry sky, it makes the tumbling body — sacrificed, you might say, to art — look as if it were straddling the cosmos.

Along with an oil-on-panel fish, modeled on a Courbet, and a plucked goose whose broken neck allows its head to lie gracefully beside it, the exhibition's final room contains pictures of barnyard animals Soutine made while in hiding in the French countryside after the Nazi invasion of Paris in 1940.

The standout is "Sheep Behind a Fence." A patchwork of creamy off-whites and off-browns, it also contains scattered daubs of maroon, the color of dried blood, as if the artist could see right through the animal's body to the action within. The sheep leans into a fence that angles out with its body, and pulls back its lips to expose a few sad teeth. Behind it the emerald-green pasture rises to two dramatic crests that look like waves, but they're rolling with streaky, bluish-white sky instead of ocean foam. It's not clear if the creature is singing or trying to escape.

Infinity and the infinitesimal

BOOK REVIEW

When Einstein Walked With Gödel: Excursions to the Edge of Thought
By Jim Holt. 368 pp. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$28.

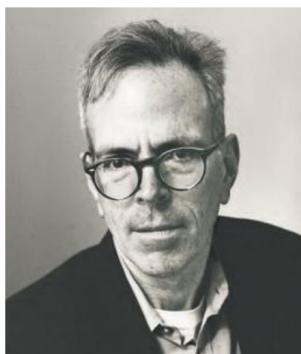
BY PARUL SEHGAL

In his 2012 book, "Why Does the World Exist?," Jim Holt invited a noisy swarm of physicists, theologians and novelists to stare into the abyss with him. He wanted their take on the question that had nagged at him since high school and shaken his faith, the question William James once called the darkest in all of philosophy: Why should there be something rather than nothing?

That book is a bouquet of defiantly loose strands. "There is nothing I dislike more than premature intellectual closure," Holt writes. But his conversations with his interlocutors — searching, spiraling, lubricated with wine — answer a separate question decisively. Given that there is something rather than nothing, well, what next? What do we do while we're here?

Holt's example is plain: Think well, eat well, and seek out those who will nourish and challenge you. It's this conviviality, and a crispness of style, that distinguish him as a popularizer of some very redoubtable mathematics and science. "My ideal is the cocktail-party chat," he writes in the preface to his new essay collection, "When Einstein Walked With Gödel," "getting across a profound idea in a brisk and amusing way to an interested friend by stripping it down to its essence (perhaps with a few swift pencil strokes on a napkin). The goal is to enlighten the newcomer while providing a novel twist that will please the expert. And never to bore."

In these pieces, plucked from the last 20 years, Holt takes on infinity and the infinitesimal, the illusion of time, the birth of eugenics, the so-called new atheism, smartphones and distraction. It is an elegant history of recent ideas. There are a few historical correctives — he dismantles the notion that Ada Lovelace, the daughter of Lord Byron, was the first computer programmer. But he generally prefers to perch in the middle of a muddle — say, the string theory wars — and hear evidence from



Jim Holt.

DOMINIQUE NABOKOV

both sides without rushing to adjudication.

The essays orbit around three chief concerns: How do we conceive of the world (metaphysics), how do we know what we know (epistemology), and how do we conduct ourselves (ethics).

But I prefer another organizing principle, my own, based not on the

theories but the thinkers: Let us name these three types "incorrigible eccentrics," "delusional hermits" and "oh, no." As Holt writes, "All these ideas come with flesh-and-blood progenitors who led highly dramatic lives. Often these lives contain an element of absurdity."

This is putting it very mildly. Almost every essay features awe-inspiring intellectual achievement and incomprehensible human suffering or folly. These facts do not seem unrelated. The men (with the exception of Lovelace, Holt writes only about men) died in asylums. They ended their lives in duels and suicide. They died of voluntary starvation.

In this #MeToo moment, when there is renewed interest in (read: confusion about) how to separate the life from the work, there is a welcome matter-of-factness in Holt's approach, a refreshing acknowledgment of how the two seep into each other, an awareness of our propensity for self-deception.

Holt is an amphibious kind of writer, so capably slipping from theology to cosmology to poetry that you're reminded that specialization is a modern invention.

The word "scientist" was coined only in 1833, by the philosopher William Whewell, who sought to professionalize science and separate it from philosophy. It was a brilliantly successful move. "Science grew to a dominant position in public life, and philosophy shrank," Freeman Dyson has written. "Philosophy shrank even further when it became detached from religion and from literature."

Part of what makes Holt so exciting is his ability to gather these disciplines under his shingle, to make their knottiest questions not only intelligible but enticing, without sacrificing rigor. "People who are otherwise cultivated will proudly confess their philistinism when it comes to mathematics," Holt writes. "The problem is that they have never been introduced to its masterpieces." Proofs can resemble "narratives, with plots and subplots, twists and resolutions. It is this kind of mathematics that most people never see. True, it can be daunting. But great works of art, even when difficult, often allow the untutored a glimpse into their beauty. You don't have to know the theory of counterpoint to be moved by a Bach fugue."

Thomas Jefferson, Holt reminds us, said that thinking about mathematics helped "beguile the wearisomeness of declining life." Bertrand Russell claimed that it was the only thing that kept him from suicide.

The title essay of this collection is a diffuse piece about the radical shifts in our notions of time, told through the friendship between Albert Einstein and Kurt Gödel. Having toppled the foundations of the physical world and mathematics, respectively, they found themselves in Princeton in the 1930s. They could not have been more different. Holt points out — Gödel so fastidious in his white linen suit, Einstein with his "pillow-combed hair" and enormous trousers (Holt is wonderful on the self-presentation of scientists). But they were becoming museum pieces of a sort and found harbor in each other, taking daily walks to campus. Holt, in a neat encapsulation of his project, elbows his way in and speculates on what they might have discussed. Even if the paces of a few decades (and too many I.Q. points to count) separate us from these giants, we're lucky to have Jim Holt help us eavesdrop.

TRAVEL

Drenched in beauty, enveloped in solitude

THE 52 PLACES TRAVELER

Chile's Route of Parks is sometimes lonely, often rainy and always gorgeous

BY JADA YUAN

Ten minutes into my drive down the dirt highway that transects Chile's Parque Pumalín in northern Patagonia, I had to pull over. Not for any mechanical reason, just to stand and stare in awe. Dense forest had suddenly given way to a lake flanked by mountains — a Chilean landscape of undulating meadows beneath a vivid blue sky streaked with cirrus clouds.

Minutes later, I came to another screaming stop. This time at a rocky stream overrun with gunnera plants, otherwise known as Chilean rhubarb or dinosaur food, for having leaves so enormous they could wrap my 5-foot-6 frame like a burrito. I'd seen one or two gunnera earlier in my Chile stay, in the rain forest of Alerce Andino, the northernmost entry on the Route of Parks (named after the towering, ancient alerce, or larch, trees that are like Chile's redwoods). But to walk among the gunnera in abundance, amid mountains untouched by human hands, felt like stepping into a time machine. "This is just like Jurassic Park," I whispered, to no one.

My 50-mile trip south through Pumalín should have clocked in at around an hour. It took me four. That meandering was spiked with so much joy. But it was also the first time, in two and a half months of solo travel, that I have felt truly lonely. There's nothing like shouting out, "This is so beautiful!" to an empty car to make you wish for company.

THE SOUTHERN HIGHWAY

Ever since I saw the list of destinations for my yearlong 52 Places trip, the Route of Parks had been emblazoned in my mind: "Road trip!" Technically, the "route" is a rebranding of a portion of Chile's epic Southern Highway, or Carretera Austral, which stretches from the industrial city of Puerto Montt in the north to the skinny tip of the country in the south. As part of that, this January, the Chilean government signed an accord with the nonprofit Tompkins Conservation to place an additional 10 million acres of combined public and private parkland under its protection. The goal is to create a 1,500-mile adventure-tourism trail that would be unmatched in the world.

Right now, though, it's a road with a hodgepodge of opportunities to fend for oneself in all kinds of wilderness. And that, of course, is the appeal. Large swaths of it were unpaved and under construction and full of potholes from intense, constant dumps of rain. Gas, cell signal and fellow humans are sparse as it snakes between beaches and the Andes, across fjords and through rain forests.

Most international backpackers I met had started in the far south at the route's famed, glacier-filled Torres del Paine. With the help of the travel writer Stephanie Dyson, I chose to head the opposite way (as do many Chileans traveling from Santiago) and maximize my time in Pumalín — a former private park that the government recently took over as part of the Tompkins accord. It's also relatively accessible from Puerto Montt via the Carretera Austral. Which is to say it took me nine hours just to get to the entrance, four driving along stunning coastline and five more on three fjord-crossing ferries. I'd do it all again, except for the part where the dirt highway disappeared and all that was left was a ditch filled with mud and boulders that made horrifying sounds as they scraped the bottom of my rental car.

DEALING WITH THE DELUGE

Chaitén, the quaint seaside town that served as my base in the park, is a backpacker's depot for Pumalín and destinations south, hosting arrivals by bus and



Scenes from Chile. Clockwise from top right: Alerce Andino, the northernmost entry on the Route of Parks; Volcán Osorno; ferns in Alerce Andino; the ferry to Parque Pumalín.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JADA YUAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

worker. By the time we'd gotten down the mountain, we had plans for dinner (at Chaitén's surprisingly good Pizzeria Recorquinta) and to travel together for the rest of the time I had in Chile. I'll spoil the ending now: nothing romantic happened, and we still WhatsApp across separate continents.

"I was a journalist, he was a German punk rock drummer. We met in a hailstorm on a volcano in Chile," is a pretty good start to a rom com, though.

THE WAY STATION THAT WAS HOME

My jaunts through the rain-soaked parks were stunning but wore me down. Puerto Varas, a small city north of Puerto Montt, was the antidote.

Located on Lago Llanquihue, Chile's second largest lake, and filled with charming Germanic architecture, it reminded me of an Alpine ski village magically transported waterside. Shops for outdoor gear (I bought hiking boots) and delicious restaurants abound. (Try Casavaldés, La Marca, Casa Mawen and Mesa Tropera.)

Some find the city bougie, and it is. It's also pleasant and cosmopolitan and easy in a way that made me feel like I could relax. And I'm not alone. I met a woman from San Francisco who'd gone there for a year and stayed for several more. Her father liked being there so much that he bought a dairy farm he's converting to a nut farm. I had taken a full-day guided hike to Alerce Andino from there before Pumalín and convinced Mr. Knoche to come back with me so we could check out the rest of the Los Lagos Region.

Our travel styles were certainly different, but I admired his ability to wake up every morning with a sunny attitude and an openness to what the day might bring him. One day, he went for a walk and brought back a friend, Lukas Lencaik from Slovakia, whom Mr. Knoche had met earlier when they were both backpacking in Argentina. Mr. Lencaik was a 31-year-old service engineer who'd quit his job to travel.

Like us, he had arrived at Puerto Varas on a whim and couldn't bring himself to leave. Two days had turned into six. "It's just so nice here," he said, echoing what all of us seemed to feel. Long-term travel is an amazing privilege with exhilarating returns and exhausting side effects. Hold onto the places and people that let you breathe.

infrequent ferry. Hostels abound, but my lodging, Hotel Mi Casa, seemed like an outlier, a Germanic chalet up a forest road I only found through quizzing children playing soccer on unmarked streets. If there is a single stoplight, I don't remember seeing it.

Ten years ago, the entire settlement had to be evacuated when the adjacent Volcán Chaitén erupted unexpectedly for the first time in over 9,000 years. Stalwarts moved back and rebuilt, but there's still a ghostly row of collapsed houses on the street closest to the mountains.

There's nothing like shouting out, "This is so beautiful!" to an empty car to make you wish for company.

It wasn't lava that caused the destruction, though, but a mudslide of volcanic ash triggered by rain, which I experienced as a biblical deluge four of my five days in Pumalín. The name of Chaitén means "basket of water" in the native language of Huilliche.

"What do you do when it rains like this?" I asked Federico Lynam, the owner of Hotel Mi Casa.

"The same thing we always do," he said. "We work hard, we eat our meals. If we stopped doing anything because it rained, nothing would ever get done."

One day, exploring Chaitén's cemetery of houses during a rare moment of sunshine, I found myself in a field, where a brown horse munched on grass next to a brown leather La-Z-Boy. Just beyond them was a building that looked exactly like where I'd go if I wanted to

get killed in the post-apocalypse. The gunnera plants in the front lawn were so overgrown that they reached the roof, a colony of Audrey Hepburn from "Little Shop of Horrors." Graffiti covered every wall, and the blue bars on the doors and broken windows, plus many tiny rooms with many tiny toilets, seem to confirm that I'd wandered into an abandoned prison.

Then the rain returned, flowing through holes in the roof as if from a sprinkler. I wasn't scared, yet, just cold. I posted a tweet, mainly to create a record of where I was. Half an hour passed, then an hour. The rain wouldn't let up and now my phone was dead and the day's light was beginning to fade.

I could see my car in the far distance. The wind was gusting with such force that the rainfall rose off the pavement in waves. I took a deep breath and ran. Water flew up my nose and soaked my socks, which wouldn't dry for days — and I was laughing. Laughing and running. And there was my car but I didn't open the door. I wanted to stand there, getting wet, taking it in.

FRIENDS YOU MEET ON VOLCANOES

Determined to get in one hike in the window of what looked like a rain-free day, I set off on the three-hour round trip trail up Volcán Chaitén. I hadn't counted on quite how remote and steep it would be. My pace was so slow that people who'd passed me on their way down were lapping me on their way up. I realized I hadn't told anyone where I was, and hadn't had a cell signal for days. All I had in my backpack was photo equipment, two liters of water and a packet of salami.

Then the rain began again, coming down so hard it flowed off every plant in mini-waterfalls. I wondered who would notice I was missing (probably my mom) and how long it would take to find my body.

By the time I crested the top of the volcano, a moonscape of ash and the charred remains of what must have once been grand alerces, three hours had passed. All of my photographic equipment failed at once. Chilly cloud cover had made my fingers numb. And I still had to hike down.

A lone figure in a black hoodie emerged from the clouds, and we circled each other silently before I finally asked him if he spoke Spanish or English. He broke into a huge grin: English. His name was Manuel Knoche, a 33-year-old Berliner who had been traveling for six months. He, too, was a little lonely and ill-prepared: he had hitchhiked to the wrong volcano, had walked two hours on the highway to get to this one, and had no idea how he was going to get back. I had a car, I told him. If he was willing to walk at my slow pace, I'd be happy to give him a lift. He said sure.

The clouds cleared for a minute, revealing a barren red-dirt mountaintop. Then they came back, bringing hail.

On the way down, Mr. Knoche and I had plenty of time to talk. He had spent his 20s playing drums in and managing punk rock bands. He was on a yearlong sabbatical from his job as a social

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A restaurant in Chaitén, a quaint seaside town that is a backpacker's depot for Pumalín.



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