



36 HOURS IN ST. MORITZ: RETRO PLEASURES IN AN ALPINE VILLAGE

BACK PAGE | TRAVEL

JONAS MEKAS'S OUTSIZE EFFECT ON AMERICAN CINEMA

PAGE 21 | FILM



Weekend

GIRDING FOR BREXIT WITH STOCKPILES AND BACKUP PLANS

PAGE 8 | BUSINESS

IN MOVIES SET AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER, NUANCE IS OFTEN HELD IN CHECK

PAGE 16 | WEEKEND



THE TREE THAT MAKES SLOTHS HAPPIER THAN ANY OTHER

PAGE 15 | SCIENCE LAB

# The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION | SATURDAY-SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2-3, 2019

## India hides jobs data but truth is clear

Kaushik Basu

### OPINION

India has a job crisis, and the government would rather you didn't notice. Last month, it hastily amended the Constitution to set aside 10 percent of all government posts for the "economically weak." But it defined the "economically weak" as anybody from a household earning less than 800,000 rupees, roughly \$11,200, a year or owning a very tiny bit of land. And as the sociologist Sonalde Desai has argued, that covers about 95 percent of India's population.

A quota that includes virtually everybody means little. But the new 10 percent quota is even worse than that:

The government is withholding official figures — suggesting that the facts are even worse than was feared.

It contains a caveat that explicitly leaves out individuals belonging to India's disadvantaged castes, who benefit from other affirmative action measures. That's a little bit as if the United States government announced that it was reserving 10 percent of

government jobs for all but the richest 5 percent of Americans, and African Americans need not apply.

How did India get to this point, especially on the watch of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who came to power in 2014 partly on the back of promises to create more jobs? Back then, the manifesto of his Bharatiya Janata Party had called India's labor force "the pillar of our growth."

According to data released by the Labour Bureau, a wing of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, unemployment in 2013-14 was 4.9 percent. But an undisclosed study by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), a government agency that conducts large-scale research, has reportedly placed the figure for 2017-18 at 6.1 percent — a 45-year high.

Measuring employment is inherently difficult in India. One reason is that the standard definition of what constitutes work — being in regular employment for a certain number of hours and a

BASU, PAGE 13

The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.



ANDREA FRAZZETTA/INSTITUTE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A workers' settlement in Khorgos, Kazakhstan, where in the barely inhabited steppes of Central Asia, China has established a hub for its Belt and Road Initiative.

## The trillion-dollar nowhere

FROM THE MAGAZINE

A Kazakhstan border town has become a harbinger of an interconnected planet

BY BEN MAUK

The Eurasian Pole of Inaccessibility is the point farthest from a sea or ocean on the planet. Located in China just east of the border with Kazakhstan, the pole gets you at least 1,550 miles from the nearest coastline into an expanse of white steppe and blue-beige mountain that is among the least populated places on earth. Here, among some of the last surviving pastoral nomads in Central Asia, the largest infrastructure project in the history of the world is growing.

About 80 miles from the Pole of Inac-

cessibility, just across the border in Kazakhstan, is a village called Khorgos. Its official population is just 908. But over the last few years, it has become an important node of the global economy. It is part of an initiative known informally as the new Silk Road, a China-led effort to build a vast network of highways, railroads and overseas shipping routes, supported by hundreds of new plants, pipelines and company towns in dozens of countries. Ultimately, the Belt and Road Initiative, or B.R.I., will link China's coastal factories and rising consumer class with Central, Southeast and South Asia; with the Middle East; with Africa; and with Russia and all of Europe, all by way of a lattice of land and sea routes whose collective ambition boggles the mind.

Khorgos is a flagship project of this work in progress, an international shipping hub and free-trade zone that its promoters say is poised to become the

next Dubai. Thanks to its location, Khorgos has become a harbinger of the interconnected planet: a zone fully enclosed by the logic of globalization, where goods flow freely across sovereign borders, following corridors designed to locate every human being on the planet within a totalizing network of producers and consumers, buyers and sellers.

Such victories of the global and industrial over the local, isolated and rural are heralded as the inevitable future of our species. What would that future look like? Whom would it benefit? What would it cost? To find out, last July I caught a sleeper train from Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, to the Chinese border, where I woke up in a train yard surrounded by desert.

The "belt" of the B.R.I. refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt, a tangle of rail and highway routes currently vining their way across the continent from eastern China to Scandinavia. The

"road" is the Maritime Silk Road, a shipping lane that will connect Chinese ports like Quanzhou, in Fujian Province, to Venice, with prospective stops along the way in Malaysia, Ethiopia and Egypt. To date, at least 68 countries, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the planet's population, have signed on to bilateral projects partly funded by China's policy banks and other state-owned companies. China has spent an estimated \$200 billion on B.R.I. projects so far, mostly in Asia, and has implied it will spend a total of \$1 trillion on hundreds of projects around the world in the coming years. When the investments from all the participating countries are combined, the estimated cost rises to \$8 trillion. Taken as a whole, the B.R.I. is unfathomable. Some individual components span hundreds of miles, like the \$68 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or the stalled and scandal-mired Bangladesh-KAZAKHSTAN, PAGE 4

## Bitcoin could help Iran subvert sanctions

TEHRAN

Companies might exploit cryptocurrency to conduct business under U.S. radar

BY THOMAS ERDBRINK

Stepping from a car into a muddy industrial site in the Iranian desert, a 22-year-old European Bitcoin investor raised his voice to be heard over the roar of a gas-fired generator.

His Iranian counterparts — a bespectacled information-technology specialist, a self-described "hard-core Bitcoiner" and the businessman running the site — walked their foreign visitor over to gray shipping containers containing thousands of small computers. When completed and connected to the power grid, the computers would help process a cryptocurrency that, in theory at least, could enable Iran to evade United States sanctions.

The value of Bitcoin, the dominant online currency in the world, is treacherously unpredictable. But it is an emerging front in the economic war between Washington and Tehran.

Iran's economy has been hobbled by banking sanctions that effectively stop foreign companies from doing business in the country. But transactions in Bitcoin, which are difficult to trace, could allow Iranians to make international payments while bypassing the American restrictions on banks.

In the past, the threat of United States sanctions has been enough to squelch most business with Iran, but the anonymous payments made in Bitcoin could change that. While Washington could still monitor and intimidate major companies, countless small and midsize companies could exploit Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies to conduct business under the American radar.

The United States Treasury, well aware of the threat, is attempting to bring Bitcoin and the others into line. In recent weeks, in response to an internet fraud case originating from Iran, the Treasury imposed sanctions on two Iranians and the Bitcoin addresses, or "wallets," they had used for trading in the currency.

The Treasury also has warned digital marketplaces that buy and sell Bitcoin and companies that sell computers used to process Bitcoin transactions that they should not provide services to Iranians. IRAN, PAGE 5

## Certainly no fairy-tale princess here

SAN DIEGO

The tainted love story of Charles and Diana inspires a musical

BY SARAH LYALL

It is the early 1980s. People have poufy hair and wear pleated pants and shapeless voluminous skirts. The someday-king (he hopes) of England, Prince Charles, is a man in possession of a fortune and in want of a wife. He is consulting his mother, wise Queen Elizabeth, for advice on what to do about Lady Diana Spencer, the 19-year-old assistant kindergarten teacher he has been dating, if having a handful of chaste encounters constitutes dating.

Because this is a musical, the queen breaks into song. What is love, she wonders, considering the complicated example of her longtime marriage to the handsome but chilly Prince Philip, who



JOHN FRANCIS PETERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Jeanna de Waal, as Diana Spencer, rehearsing "Diana" in San Diego. "Diana should be pop and rock," said David Bryan, who wrote the music. "Her songs are emotional."

has a wandering eye. Men may "take other friends," but "it doesn't mean devotion ends," she warbles, before getting to the point: "Whatever love means."

Charles, who unfortunately has a longtime girlfriend, Camilla Parker Bowles, who even more unfortunately has a husband, takes up the refrain, musing on his predicament: He is about to propose to someone he barely knows. He is perhaps the least qualified person in the kingdom to understand matters of the heart.

Longtime observers of the force of nature that was Diana, the Princess of Wales — and there are many of us out here, despite the fact that she died more than 20 years ago — will notice that "whatever love means" is plucked from something Charles said after he and Diana announced their engagement, all the way back in 1981.

When the pair were asked whether they loved each other, Charles looked weirded out, as though the thought had never occurred to him. DIANA, PAGE 2

# The truth is worth it.

The New York Times



NEWSSTAND PRICES

Andorra € 3.70  
Antigua & Barbuda \$ 4.00  
Australia € 3.50  
Bahamas \$ 4.00  
Belgium € 3.50  
Bos. & Herz. KM 5.50  
Cameroon CFA 2700  
Canada CANS \$ 5.00  
Croatia KN 22.00  
Cyprus € 3.50  
Czech Rep CZK 110  
Denmark Dkr 30  
Egypt EGP 32.00  
Estonia € 3.50  
Finland € 3.50  
France € 3.50  
Gabon CFA 2700  
Germany € 3.50

Great Britain £ 2.20  
Greece € 2.80  
Hungary HUF 950  
Israel NIS 13.50  
Israel / East NIS 11.50  
Italy € 3.50  
Ivory Coast CFA 2700  
Jordan JD 2.00  
Kazakhstan US\$ 3.50  
Latvia € 4.50  
Lebanon LBP 5,000  
Lithuania € 3.50  
Malta € 3.50  
Montenegro € 3.40  
Morocco MAD 30  
Norway Nkr 33

Oman OMR 1.40  
Poland Zl 15  
Portugal € 3.50  
Qatar QR 12.00  
Republic of Ireland € 3.40  
Reunion € 3.50  
Saudi Arabia SR 15.00  
Senegal CFA 2700  
Serbia Din 280  
Slovakia € 3.50  
Slovenia € 3.40  
Spain € 3.50  
Sweden Skr 35  
Switzerland CHF 4.80  
Syria US\$ 3.00  
The Netherlands € 3.50

Issue Number  
No. 42,265



PAGE TWO

Why did the Soviets invade Afghanistan?

WHITE HOUSE MEMO  
WASHINGTON

Newly published cable underscores Moscow’s fear it would turn to the West

BY PETER BAKER

One day in October 1979, an American diplomat named Archer K. Blood arrived at Afghanistan’s government headquarters, summoned by the new president, whose ousted predecessor had just been smothered to death with a pillow.

While the Kabul government was a client of the Soviet Union, the new president, Hafizullah Amin, had something else in mind. “I think he wants an improvement in U.S.-Afghan relations,” Mr. Blood wrote in a cable back to Washington. It was possible, he added, that Mr. Amin wanted “a long-range hedge against over-dependence on the Soviet Union.”

Mr. Blood’s newly published cable sheds light on what really drove the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan only two months after his meeting with Mr. Amin. Spoiler alert: It was not because of terrorism, as claimed last month by President Trump, who said the Soviets were right to invade. Among the real motivations, the cable and other documents suggest, was a fear that Afghanistan might switch loyalties to the West.

“This was a key moment that raised the Soviet sense of threat,” said Thomas S. Blanton, the director of the National Security Archive, a research organization at George Washington University that recently obtained the cable through the Freedom of Information Act and posted it online on Tuesday. “It’s a fascinating case study of the necessity in all of these international affairs of putting yourself in the other guy’s place — what does it look like over there?”

The origins of the Soviet invasion offer lessons for a history-challenged Mr. Trump as he negotiates an end to the United States’ own war in Afghanistan, now 17 years old.

A hardscrabble land of breathtaking beauty and unimaginable brutality, torn by religious, ethnic and tribal divisions and stuck in a virtually medieval reality, Afghanistan has been at the center of geopolitical contests for centuries — and high on the American priority list since the Soviet invasion of December 1979.

That intervention ruptured relations between the superpowers as President Jimmy Carter suspended grain sales to the Soviet Union and boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. He also began a military buildup later accelerated by President Ronald Reagan, and American support for the mujahedeen rebels helped drive the bloodied Soviets out in 1989.

Some of the United States’ allies in that war, however, later switched sides, and Afghanistan became a haven for Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda. After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, President George W. Bush sent forces to topple the Taliban government. His suc-



ALAIN MINGAM/GAMMA-RAPHO, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Soviet soldiers in January 1980 in Gardez, Afghanistan, a month after the Soviet Union invaded. American support for the mujahedeen rebels helped drive the Soviets out in 1989.

cessor, President Barack Obama, temporarily sent even more troops.

But Mr. Trump argues that it is time to leave. During a cabinet meeting in early January where he discussed plans to withdraw half of the 14,000 American troops in Afghanistan, Mr. Trump said other countries should pick up the slack, including Russia.

“The reason Russia was in Afghanistan was because terrorists were going into Russia,” he said of the 1979 invasion. “They were right to be there. The problem is it was a tough fight.”

No other American president has endorsed the Soviet aggression, and Mr. Trump’s fanciful version of history drew widespread mockery. But Mr. Blanton, who researched the issue with Svetlana Savranskaya, a senior analyst at the archive, said initial American interpretations of Soviet motivations were wrong, as well.

In a memo to Mr. Carter two days after the invasion, his national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, suggested that it stemmed from “the age-long dream of Moscow to have direct access to the Indian Ocean” — although it would require further territorial claims by Moscow even if it did conquer landlocked Afghanistan.

The more conventional understanding was the desire by the Kremlin to prop up a fellow Communist state.



JACQUES LANGEVIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mujahedeen fighters looking for Soviet troops in 1980. Afghanistan has been at the center of geopolitical contests for centuries.

Another go for Charles and Diana, this time with music

DIANA, FROM PAGE 1

So that while Diana was murmuring, “Of course,” Charles was declaring, “Whatever in love means.”

It is this colossal mismatch of emotion and expectation that the makers of the new musical “Diana” have seized upon as the basis for this latest foray into the crowded field of Diana-divination. The production, still in rehearsals, is to begin previews on Feb. 19 at La Jolla Playhouse before opening on March 3; the planned run has already been extended through April 7.

There are many ways the Tony Award-winning creators of the show could have gone. In her relatively short and wholly vivid life, Diana was many things — naïve victim; media-savvy manipulator; loving mother; fashion icon; lost soul; compassionate charity campaigner; femme fatale — take your pick. How you saw her depended on where you stood. But at heart, said Christopher Ashley, the director of “Diana,” she was a woman who dreamed of love — specifically the sort found in a romance novel or a fairy tale. And after landing a real-life prince, she discovered that princes — or at least Prince Charles — are not all they are cracked up to be.

Musical theater does love a princess — see “Anastasia” and “Frozen,” both on Broadway right now — but these are modern times, and marrying someone with a palace and a fancy title does not guarantee a happy ending.

“We were interested in Diana as a character who starts with one dream and actually gets it, and then has to find a new dream,” said Mr. Ashley, who is also the Playhouse’s artistic director.

The musical zips through her early life, settles into the royal romance and marriage, and — except for a quick epilogue tying up loose ends — concludes when that marriage breaks down and a liberated Diana breaks free to find her own voice and her own way forward.

“What I love is how she constantly changes her aspirations to advance herself,” said Joe DiPietro, who wrote the book. He is 57, around the same age as Diana would be, and supplemented his



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN FRANCIS PETERS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Christopher Ashley, above right, director of “Diana,” with the musical’s stars, Roe Hartrampf, left, and Jeanna de Waal, second from right. Top, the cast rehearsing.

general understanding of her as a doomed mega-celebrity with extensive research from the exhaustive supply of books, articles and films available in the infinite Diana-sphere.

“I’m not a fan of musicals that try to

tell about someone’s whole life,” he added. “What was interesting was the marriage. I wanted it to be very focused.”

Diana once said that there were “three people in my marriage,” meaning her, Charles and Camilla. The musical

makes the trio a quartet by including Queen Elizabeth, who worked so hard, by all accounts, to keep the couple together, for the sake of kingdom and family. Other characters in the ensemble include Diana’s sometime lover James Hewitt, but the focus is on those four.

The royal-industrial complex is the gift that keeps on giving. Who among the journalists and biographers and filmmakers and television producers in Britain has not produced a work about the royals? But while most of the recent royal efforts have come courtesy of Brits like Peter Morgan (“The Queen,” “The Crown”) and Mike Bartlett (“King Charles III” on Broadway) this production is an all-American enterprise, reuniting the creative team behind “Memphis,” the left-field hit about the southern roots of rock ‘n’ roll that won the 2010 Tony for best musical.

“We’re two guys from Jersey writing about the royals,” said David Bryan, who wrote the music and collaborated with Mr. DiPietro on the lyrics. (You might know him from his day job, as the keyboardist for Bon Jovi.) “It would be like two Brits writing about the Kennedys,” he added. “In England, opinion is very divided, and so it helps that we’re removed from the controversy,” so we can see the story from an ocean-wide remove.

Their distance, too, has contributed to the production’s decision to not assign blame. It presents its characters as victims of circumstance, like protagonists of a Greek tragedy whose fates have been woven into the fabric of their lives.

Judy Kaye, a Tony winner for “Phantom of the Opera” and “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” plays Elizabeth. “When I was younger, in my mind I was taking sides,” she said of the end of the royal marriage. “What we were being fed was that there was this young woman who was a total victim,” she said. “But nobody is a total victim.” She added: “I feel sorry for all of them.”

Charles’s tragedy, she said, is that tradition and expectation forced him to give up the love of his life, Camilla. (Of course, he ended up marrying her after

Diana divorced him and then died in a fiery car accident during an ill-conceived excursion in Paris with her unsuitable lover, but that’s another story.)

During a recent day of rehearsals at the Playhouse, lines and lyrics and dance numbers and even whole songs were still being tweaked and reconsidered, as is often the case in the weeks before previews begin. A reporter and photographer were allowed to see only a few snippets. One song, “This Is How Your People Dance,” laid bare the chasm of taste and temperament between Charles and Diana. In the scene, Charles (Roe Hartrampf, with a Charles-ian side part in his hair) takes Diana (played by the English actress Jeanna de Waal) to hear some music as a treat (supposedly). Not music she likes; music he likes — namely, Bach, performed by the Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich.

“We were interested in Diana as a character who starts with one dream and actually gets it, and then has to find a new dream.”

He is transported. Diana does her best to keep up, first guessing that she’s hearing Mozart and then saying, in an effort to be charming, that she was “close.”

“Not really,” Charles says.

Her mind wanders. “The Russian plays on/Like an endless telethon/How I wish he were Elton John,” she sings, as she rises from her seat and (in her imagination, played out onstage) embarks on a wild rave with the ushers and other workers at the concert hall, dancing as a regular person rather than a royal.

It might seem weird to have a long-time American rock musician writing songs for a musical about the British royal family. But the characters’ musical tastes are vivid reflections of their characters. “We thought, What if we gave each character a musical voice?” Mr. Bryan said.

“Diana should be pop and rock. Her songs are emotional, and the chorus can

“If they lost Afghanistan to the West, they would be losing more than a strategically placed country on their borders,” said Michael Dobbs, whose book “Down With Big Brother” chronicled the last years of the Soviet Union. “They would effectively be acknowledging that history can be reversed, setting the stage for the disintegration of the entire empire.”

Mr. Blood’s cable suggests that Mr. Amin was open to a realignment that stirred fears in Moscow of another Egypt, which broke from the Soviet orbit in 1972. During their 40-minute meeting on Oct. 27, 1979, Mr. Amin, speaking English, said he wanted to draw closer to the United States, where he once studied.

“He then went on, with considerable eloquence, to stress his personal commitment to improving U.S.-Afghan relations, expressing his affection for the U.S. acquired during his residence in our country,” Mr. Blood wrote.

Mr. Amin denied that the Soviets called the shots. “He was declaiming how he could never sacrifice Afghan independence to any foreign demands, including from the Soviets,” Mr. Blood wrote.

The American diplomat came away with a positive view of Mr. Amin. “The man is impressive,” Mr. Blood wrote. “His survival to date is by itself impressive, as is the air of quiet self-confidence he exudes. Clearly, he is aware of the mortality rate of Afghan leaders; several times he said ‘even if I am killed tomorrow.’ He masks his ruthlessness and toughness quite well by his soft-spoken manner.”

Still, Mr. Blood was cautious, recommending no seismic shift immediately while the United States assessed Mr. Amin’s staying power. In Moscow, however, the meeting was noticed with alarm. “We have been receiving information about Amin’s behind-the-scenes activities which might mean his political reorientation to the West,” Yuri V. Andropov, the K.G.B. chief, told the Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev in a handwritten memo in December 1979. “He keeps his contacts with the American chargé d’affaires secret from us.”

The Andropov memo was made public in 1995 when Anatoly F. Dobrynin, the longtime ambassador to the United States, went to the Russian archives and transcribed documents for a project by the Norwegian Nobel Institute. At a meeting on Dec. 8, 1979 — also transcribed by Mr. Dobrynin — Mr. Andropov and Dmitri F. Ustinov, the defense minister, cited the dangers of American missiles being deployed in Afghanistan. “The picture Andropov is painting in early December is that if Amin did a flip, it would totally change the geopolitical balance in South Asia,” Mr. Blanton said. “It would be as if Mexico became a base for Soviet short-range missiles. How would we feel?”

The invasion was intended to be a quick operation, as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. But resistance to the Soviets was fierce and unrelenting. The realignment Mr. Blood broached took place as a result, with the United States coming to the aid of the Afghan rebels. It was, however, a realignment that would not last.

get back, and there are more drums and keyboards. Kind of like my band.”

Meanwhile, he continued, “Charles should be contemporary, but like a string quartet. The paparazzi are like punk guitars and the Clash. The queen should be classical with royal drums and regality. And Camilla should be Lite FM, adult contemporary.”

In any production about real-life people, the challenge for the performers is to present an alternative that can crown out the reality in the audience’s heads. Ms. de Waal, for instance, bears a resemblance to but is no dead ringer for Diana. She has studied videos, taking on the plumpiness of Diana’s accent, the coquettishness of her walk, the tilt of her head, but it can only go so far.

“We’ve been very clear that we’re not making a documentary, and I’m not her,” she said. On the other hand, that “leaves a lot of freedom to explore who she was behind closed doors,” she added. “We’re conscious to show that there was a sort of mutual affection. She wasn’t delusional; she wasn’t mad; they did build a life together.”

Expect a major contribution from the costume designer, William Ivey Long, by all accounts an enthusiastic Diana obsessive who, by way of getting the job, tacked up hundreds of pictures of the princess in every outfit imaginable — her puffy-sleeved meringue of a wedding dress; the sexy sheath worn as a see-what-you’re-missing statement of post-separation independence — on the walls of his studio in Manhattan.

With early performances sold out and tickets sales brisk, expectations are high for “Diana,” which (as yet) has no current plans to transfer to New York. In the end, Mr. Bryan said, the creators want to tell a human story of thwarted love — not just Diana’s, but also Charles’s and Camilla’s and, in a way, Elizabeth’s, too.

“This is such a human story,” he said. “Everyone thinks if they have castles and beautiful stuff, they’ll be happy. But stuff doesn’t make you happy. Our subtitle was one we didn’t use: ‘Trapped in the Kingdom.’”



# World

## Soccer player’s detention is ‘historic test’

BANGKOK

### Global sports industry pushes for release of a Bahraini held in Thailand

BY HANNAH BEECH

The global sports market is worth hundreds of billions of dollars a year. Now, this powerful industry is coming together to promote an unlikely cause: human rights.

Since late November, a Bahrain-born soccer player for a minor team in Australia has been held in detention in Thailand. The player, Hakeem al-Araibi, 24, is not a famous athlete. He has no lucrative sponsors.

But he has spoken out against one of the most powerful men in international soccer, who is also a member of the ruling family of Bahrain. His testimony of torture at the hands of Bahrain’s repressive government earned him refugee status in Australia, which determined that he faced credible threats of persecution should he return to the Gulf state.

Still, over the past week, Mr. Araibi has collected an impressive list of sup-

porters in the world of international sports.

Fatma Samoura, the secretary general of FIFA, the international body governing global soccer, has called for Thailand to return him to Australia “as a matter of urgency.” So has Thomas Bach, the head of the International Olympic Committee, who raised the issue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On Tuesday, Praful Patel, a vice president of the Asian Football Confederation, issued a statement asking Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha of Thailand to ensure Mr. Araibi’s return to his adopted home.

The head of the Asian Football Confederation is Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa, the Bahraini official whom Mr. Araibi accused of not stopping the persecution of athletes in his charge. Sheikh Salman also serves as a FIFA vice president.

Such a collection of statements of support is rare, said Mary Harvey, the chief executive of the Center for Sports and Human Rights, which assembles governments, sports bodies, corporate sponsors and nongovernmental groups to ensure the role of human rights in sports.

“Hakeem is a historic test case, be-



Hakeem al-Araibi, center, has spoken out against one of the most powerful men in international soccer, who is also a member of the ruling family of Bahrain.

cause it’s the first time that we’ve seen these big, powerful sports bodies all come together publicly to address the fate of a single person,” said Ms. Harvey, who was a member of the United States national soccer team and a FIFA executive.

Sports has been buffeted by growing concerns about the hidden human costs of mega-events, like the Olympics and the World Cup, that have been used to bring international glory to authoritarian governments. Hundreds of foreign laborers, mainly from South Asia, have

died in the building of stadiums and other infrastructure for the 2022 men’s soccer World Cup in Qatar, according to the International Trade Union Confederation.

Last year’s hosting of the men’s soccer World Cup by Russia was marred by racism and homophobia controversies. Both bids for the World Cup by Qatar and Russia were tarnished by a series of corruption scandals that cleared out a significant portion of FIFA’s leadership ranks. With corporate sponsors nervous about a backlash from sports fans, FIFA unveiled a series of reforms aimed at bettering its human rights.

In January, Brendan Schwab, the executive director of the World Players Association, which represents 85,000 professional athletes worldwide, wrote an urgent legal request on the “severe violation of the human rights” of Mr. Araibi, which was submitted to FIFA.

“Hakeem’s case is about a football player, it’s about a human-rights defender, it’s about a refugee and it’s about global sport’s ability to uphold its stated commitment to human rights,” Mr. Schwab said.

Although FIFA now has binding human-rights policies, they are largely untested.

When Mr. Araibi traveled to Bangkok

with his wife on Nov. 27 for a belated honeymoon, the Thai authorities were waiting for him at the airport.

Initially, Thai officials said Mr. Araibi had been detained based on an Interpol request alerting the immigration authorities to fugitives of justice. But Interpol quickly lifted that request because such alerts, called red notices, are not supposed to apply to refugees.

Nevertheless, Bahrain has formally asked Thailand for Mr. Araibi’s extradition so he can return to face a 10-year prison sentence for a conviction in absentia on charges that he burned a police station, among other convictions. Mr. Araibi was playing in a televised football match when the police station he was supposed to have attacked was burned.

Last week, the extradition request was passed on to the Thai attorney general’s office, said Busadee Santipitaks, a spokeswoman for the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, meaning that Mr. Araibi’s fate could be decided in a matter of days.

Thailand, which has not signed an international convention on refugees, has a history of extraditing human rights defenders to countries they have fled, like China or Bahrain, where they are likely to face imprisonment or torture.

## A life off-line? Tonga finds out the hard way

HONG KONG

### Deep-sea internet cable cut, leaving country isolated from the digital world

BY DANIEL VICTOR

The residents of Tonga, a remote island nation 1,100 miles northeast of New Zealand, have gained unwanted perspective on how much they’ve come to depend on the internet.

An underwater fiber-optic cable that connects Tongans to high-speed internet was severed on Jan. 20, plunging the roughly 100,000 residents into digital darkness. Internet connections were lost on the country’s more than 170 islands, international calls wouldn’t go through and credit card payments couldn’t be processed.

Almost two weeks later, officials are still working to repair the damage as trickles of connectivity have returned, including phone service.

**“The cost of a backup is huge, and for a country like Tonga, we don’t have the luxury of money to put aside for a disaster like this.”**

Ezinet, a local satellite internet provider with speeds comparable to dial-up, has been able to offer some connectivity, but not enough for all. And with precious little bandwidth available, officials have blocked sites like Facebook and YouTube so that essential services can squeeze through.

Long lines have formed for brief rations of internet access at the headquarters of the Tonga Communications Corporation, the national internet service provider.

Tony Matthias, the owner of a tour company and guesthouse, said he had been waiting in the line twice a day, often for several hours, because responding to potential customers is essential for keeping his business afloat.

“I always respond to messages as soon as I see them — that’s been my pol-

icy,” he said by telephone. “I don’t wait. If I get up in the middle of the night, I check my email. I get up first thing in the morning, I check my email. And then during the day, I check it many times to reply to messages. But I can’t now.”

Tonga wasn’t wired for high-speed internet until 2013, when officials hailed the installation of a 514-mile fiber-optic cable as a landmark event. The cable connects Tonga to Fiji and then to the Southern Cross Cable, which links Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and the continental United States.

The Tonga cable, which was estimated to cost about \$30 million — funded by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and Tonga Cable — increased internet speeds in the country to 10 gigabits per second from 20 to 30 megabits per second.

It wasn’t thought to be susceptible to such a blackout.

Piveni Piukala, a director of Tonga Cable, said the company believed that a large ship had cut the cable in multiple places by dragging an anchor along the seabed, according to The Associated Press. It hoped to restore service by this weekend.

Mr. Piukala said that an oil tanker was in the area at the time the cable was severed, and that the company would work with the authorities to determine whether any negligence was involved. Still, the episode made clear how easily the nation could be cut off.

“We don’t need a rocket scientist to tell us we need a better plan,” he told The Associated Press, adding, “The cost of a backup is huge, and for a country like Tonga, we don’t have the luxury of money to put aside for a disaster like this.”

Mary Lyn Fonua, the managing editor of Matangi Tonga, an online news site, said the site initially could not be updated for several days, though the staff has since been able to resume reporting, including on the outage.

Losing Facebook has been a difficult blow to the many residents who rely on it to stay in touch with families overseas, she said. And most small businesses have been hurt one way or another.

“We’re all so hooked on the internet for what we’re doing,” Ms. Fonua said. “It just shows how rapidly, since they put our cable in, we’ve come to depend on these high-speed communications.”



Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga, which lost access to high-speed internet service when a data cable was severed, plunging the country’s 100,000 residents into digital darkness.



He’s a fan.



To find out why Rami Malek is a fan or to become a Fan of M.O. visit [mandarinoriental.com](http://mandarinoriental.com) BANGKOK • BARCELONA • BEIJING • BODRUM • BOSTON • CANOUAN • DOHA • DUBAI • GENEVA • GUANGZHOU • HONG KONG • JAKARTA • KUALA LUMPUR • LONDON • MACAU • MARRAKECH • MIAMI • MILAN • MUNICH • NEW YORK • PARIS • PRAGUE • SANYA • SHANGHAI • SINGAPORE • TAIPEI • TOKYO • WASHINGTON D.C.



WORLD

# Can a desert village turn into a global hub?

**KAZAKHSTAN, FROM PAGE 1**  
China-India-Myanmar Corridor. But at Khorgos, I had heard, I could get closer than anywhere else to appreciating the scope of its aspirations.

Khorgos is one of a cluster of villages encircling a former trading post of the ancient world called Zharkent. From Zharkent a farmer who moonlights as a cabdriver drove me to an overlook. We parked near a small rock-crushing plant above a valley of bright green cornfields, beyond which I could see this improbable new crossroads of the global economy.

The Chinese side of the border was easiest to spot. Since 2014, an instant city of 100,000 people, also called Khorgos (sometimes spelled Horgos), has appeared; its dark high-rises glittered in the sun. The Kazakh side of the border was less impressive from afar, but I knew it now hosted a first-of-its-kind free-trade zone, opened on territory shared with China. Behind a copse of cypress trees, I could also make out the gantry cranes of the new dry port — an inland shipping-and-logistics hub for freight trains — that began operating in 2015. Adjacent to it was a nascent railroad company town, and other plots nearby were cleared for factories and warehouses to be staffed by some of the future residents of the city of 100,000 that, if all goes as planned, will soon rise to match the one across the border.

**Critics have described the Belt and Road Initiative as a new kind of colonialism or even part of a strategy of “debt-trap diplomacy.”**

Two miles beyond the checkpoint, across a valley of farmland, a tangerine ridge signaled the start of China's largest territory, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. In recent years, the Chinese government has erected the most advanced police state in the world in Xinjiang, targeting the region's Turkic Muslims, especially its Uighur ethnic group, who make up about half the region's population. As part of what Chinese Communist Party literature describes as “de-extremification” efforts to combat terrorism, authorities have created an exclusion zone of state surveillance, arbitrary mass internment, brainwashing and torture. According to the United States State Department, between 800,000 and two million people, or up to 15 percent of Xinjiang's Muslim population, have been incarcerated in a growing network of more than 1,000 concentration camps.

The B.R.I. can be seen as a framework through which China's leaders can present virtually any component of its foreign policy as part of a nonthreatening vision of what party representatives like to call “win win” global development. In recent years, China has floated several expansions of President Xi Jinping's initial Belt and Road vision that make its scope seem all but limitless: the “Digital Silk Road” into the frontiers of the virtual, the “Pacific Silk Road” to South America, and the Arctic-crossing “Silk Road on Ice.” Xi himself has meanwhile extolled the merits of globalization at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and worked to brand his “project of the century” as a natural extension of the spontaneous trade routes that once laced across the Eurasian continent.

Critics have described the B.R.I. as a new kind of colonialism or even part of a strategy of “debt-trap diplomacy,” seducing cash-poor countries with infrastructure projects that are unlikely to generate enough revenue to cover the interest on the loans that funded them. That is the unhappy situation at the



Khorgos Gateway, a dry port on the border of Kazakhstan and China, where goods can be consolidated and transferred among the trains crisscrossing Asia and Europe.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA FRAZZETTA/INSTITUTE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



A man carting goods out of the International Center for Boundary Cooperation, or I.C.B.C., a duty- and visa-free zone that straddles the Chinese-Kazakh border.

China-funded Port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka, which the China Harbor Engineering Company took over after Sri Lanka fell behind on debt service. The Center for Global Development lists eight countries that face high risk of “debt distress” from B.R.I. projects that they can't afford. Some experts view the camps and other security measures in Xinjiang as partly a reaction to the increased freight traffic now moving across the region.

Kazakhstan is poised to play a central role in China's plan. The B.R.I. was first announced in the Kazakh capital of Astana, at a 2013 ceremony attended by Xi and Kazakhstan's longtime president, Nursultan A. Nazarbayev. At the same event, Xi and Nazarbayev also celebrated the opening of a joint gas pipeline and signed \$30 billion worth of trade and investment agreements. Although in the

past Kazakhstan's economy has tended to orbit Russia's, in 2007 China edged out Russia as Kazakhstan's top importer, and some critics fear that the B.R.I. is leading the country deeper into economic vassalage. But the government is not letting such criticisms, or even the presence of a prison state across the border, interfere with its collaboration with China.

Khorgos Gateway rises out of the flat desert basin, a moon base of cranes and storage silos into which, every so often, a freight train slowly rolls. The chief executive of Khorgos Gateway, Zhaslan Khamzin, welcomed me into a tidy office overlooking the freight yard. “The future lies here,” he said proudly.

Since the dry port opened in 2015, Khamzin said, companies who manufacture goods in China have begun to recognize the advantages of a modern-



Tourist attractions at the I.C.B.C. Chinese officials have announced plans to build an additional 50 special economic development zones in countries from Algeria to Vietnam.

ized overland trade route across Asia. The dry port has transferred John Deere combines to Azerbaijan, he said, and Hewlett-Packard parts to Western Europe. He added that it may be much cheaper to ship containers by sea, but it can take more than three times as long, and air transit is the most expensive by far. By contrast, a container passing through Khorgos can travel from a Chinese point of origin to Europe in about 14 days. “We're going to be a central distribution point,” he concluded. If all goes well, according to company forecasts, in a few years Khorgos Gateway will be the largest dry port in the world. For now, it's still a modest operation; if it were a United States seaport, its 2018 throughput would place it somewhere around the 26th-largest in the country.

The national railway company of Kazakhstan owns 51 percent of Khorgos

Gateway. The remaining 49 percent is split between two Chinese state-owned companies. Khamzin viewed China's participation not as economic imperialism but as proof of the port's likelihood of success. The Chinese, he explained, “are the kind of people that if they saw no commercial opportunity, they wouldn't invest here.” Such arrangements are less one-sided in Kazakhstan than in some of the more debt-strapped B.R.I. countries. But Chinese investments have in all likelihood muffled Kazakhstan's response to the crackdown in Xinjiang.

Khorgos's other major landmark is a boomtown of open borders known as the International Center for Boundary Cooperation, or I.C.B.C., which China and Kazakhstan established in 2011 about six miles from the dry port. In this duty- and visa-free zone, Kazakh citizens will-

# Ahead of election, India's leader is accused of hiding job data

NEW DELHI

BY JEFFREY GETTLEMAN  
AND HARI KUMAR

When Indian voters swept Prime Minister Narendra Modi into power five years ago, it was in no small part because of his vows to create millions of jobs and vault India into an era of prosperity.

But now, just months before the next general election, Mr. Modi is facing a potentially troublesome challenge on the jobs promises that may be partly of his own making.

His government has been accused of suppressing an official report on the national unemployment rate that apparently showed it had reached a 45-year high in 2017-18.

The Business Standard, a respected Indian financial newspaper, published leaked findings from the unemployment report, which is based on a survey and produced by the National Sample Survey Office, a government agency.

There had been expectations that the report would be released in December. Two commissioners responsible for reviewing data in the report, who had advocated releasing it, resigned in protest in the past week.

Officials in Mr. Modi's government scrambled on Thursday to blunt the impact of what amounted to withholding information that discredits the core of his economic record. The chairman of NITI Aayog, a government research or-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, center, has vowed to transform India's economy. Employment is expected to be the most important issue for voters in this year's general election.

MONEY SHARMA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

ganization, said the unemployment report was still in draft form, was not ready for dissemination and would be released in March. The response raised the possibility that the data could be revised.

But economists said the findings, if verified, were problematic for Mr. Modi, the dynamic prime minister whose popularity has always rested on his Hindu nationalism and promises to make India an economic powerhouse rivaling China.

While the leaked 2017-18 unemploy-

ment rate, 6.1 percent, may not sound so gloomy, it is roughly triple the rate of five years earlier, the last time a comparable national survey was conducted. And with India's work force population of roughly 500 million, that translates into 30 million people who cannot find a job — including many of the 10 million to 12 million young people flooding into the labor market each year.

The rate also understates the true picture, partly because of the way India counts the number of employed. People who work irregularly — a couple of

months on, a couple of months off — are considered employed unless they are jobless for a majority of the year.

“Poor people can't afford to be unemployed for too long; after a while, they'll usually take whatever job they can get,” said Himanshu, an associate professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi who goes by only one name. “That's why 6 percent is a really serious number.”

The report is a comprehensive look at the job consequences of two disruptive economic changes Mr. Modi imposed in the past few years.

First was his abrupt decision in November 2016 to eliminate most of the country's cash currency in circulation. That decision, known as demonetization, was meant to crack down on illicit cash transactions, but the change was so hasty and hectic that it created acute shortages and inflicted enormous damage on large swaths of India's economy.

Then in July 2017, Mr. Modi implemented a sweeping new single sales tax code, the Goods and Services Tax, known as the G.S.T., but enforcement of the change was so disorganized that economists say it crippled many small businesses.

The leaked unemployment report, if confirmed, undercuts a basic premise of Mr. Modi's 2014 campaign: creating jobs for the country's enormous and young work force. People 35 and younger represent roughly two-thirds of the population of 1.35 billion, and, the thinking went, they would earn and spend, expanding and accelerating economic

growth. The effects would help pull millions more out of poverty.

Opposition politicians seized on the leaked report as evidence that Mr. Modi and his governing Bharatiya Janata Party were responsible for the worst unemployment rate since 1972-73, when the country was roiled by war with Pakistan and by the effects of global oil market shocks.

“NoMo Jobs!” Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Indian National Congress, an opposition party, wrote on Twitter, adding that the “leaked job creation report card reveals a National Disaster.”

**A leaked unemployment rate showed it at a 45-year high.**

The leaked report compounded other recent signs of employment distress in India, including data from the All India Manufacturers' Organization in December that said 3.5 million jobs had been lost since 2016.

A far more dire study, released Jan. 9 by the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy, a business information company in Mumbai, India, said 11 million jobs were lost in 2018 alone.

Mahesh Vyas, the company's managing director, attributed the plunge largely to the “combined effects of demonetization and G.S.T.”

The leaked report came against the backdrop of preparations for national elections likely to be held by early May. While Mr. Modi once looked unbeat-

ing to brave the hourlong wait at customs control are permitted to enter a walled section of the Chinese side of Khorgos across the border to buy cheap linens and electronics, and Chinese tourists may enter a walled leisure area inside Kazakhstan to buy souvenirs and eat Kazakh delicacies.

A United Nations human rights panel describes the entirety of Xinjiang as a “massive internment camp,” but that didn't stop workers I met at the dry port from suggesting I cross into China by way of the I.C.B.C. area. Khorgos Gateway and the I.C.B.C. are the products of special economic development zones set up in coordination with China: industrial and commercial arenas designed to foster jobs and investments. There are dozens of such zones within China — the first, Shenzhen, is now a city of more than 12 million people — but Khorgos is the first to exist partly outside China's own borders. That will soon change. Chinese officials have announced plans to build 50 more international zones in countries from Algeria to Vietnam.

At Khorgos, the I.C.B.C. seems intended to complement the dry port's vision of frictionless trade with an equivalent vision of borderless commerce, even if most Kazakhs understand the project as a wholesale depot for cheaply made Chinese goods. A popular hustle among shopkeepers from Almaty is to hire one of the locals who wait outside the I.C.B.C., and who are euphemistically called “carriers,” to help circumvent the weight limits on imports. By all accounts, customs officials tend to look the other way.

China is said to be spending billions of dollars building up its side of Khorgos. By contrast, Kazakhstan's share of the I.C.B.C. is mostly a dream of the future. Projects like a constellation of luxury hotels, a sports complex and a Disneyland-style theme park called Happy Land Khorgos have languished for lack of funding. Fields of rubble and stalled construction projects are scattered among the few small retail buildings and the yurt-shaped gift shops that are the Kazakh side's most distinctive feature.

In recent years, the name Khorgos has instead become synonymous among Kazakhs with smuggling rings and high-profile corruption cases. In 2011, authorities arrested the head of customs at Khorgos as part of a larger takedown of a \$130 billion smuggling ring. Based on the crowds I saw in front of the border checkpoint, informal gray-market carrying at Khorgos seems to have replaced animal husbandry as the region's main line of work.

The ancient Silk Road was equal parts trade route and social network. The routes themselves were in constant flux and administered by no one, and they succeeded through incremental growth and local knowledge in response to changing needs — the exact opposite of the Ozymandian ambitions and sweeping autocratic statecraft that characterize the Belt and Road. For all its potential to create jobs and modernize infrastructures, the project has also created a halo of mass internment camps for the powerless and gray-market economies for the poor. While new official jobs in Khorgos are lifting a lucky few out of poverty, it is far more common to find farmers and herders moonlighting as taxi drivers, security guards or smugglers, part of a precarious network of low-paid freelancers. Such work is susceptible by design to sudden changes in enforcement and depends on a constant influx of disposable workers. It seemed like a high cost for connecting the world.

*Adapted from an article that originally appeared in The New York Times Magazine.*

able, recent polls have suggested he is heading into a more competitive race. Any bad news on employment figures could damage his prospects.

Employment is expected to be the single most important issue for voters this year, a new Times Now-VMR opinion poll has found.

Economists have said it would be unfair to blame Mr. Modi's government entirely for India's unemployment trend, which predated his ascent to power. Less investment in the rural economy, disastrous droughts and struggles in Indian manufacturing also have contributed.

“This buildup has been going on for many years,” said Mr. Himanshu. “In fact, Modi came on the promise of providing jobs. But the situation has become worse in his period.”

While Mr. Gandhi, the scion of a long political dynasty, has been hammering the Indian government over its record on employment, Mr. Modi's ministers were quick to defend the prime minister after the jobs report was leaked.

“Our economy is growing at an unprecedented rate,” Raj Kumar Singh, the energy minister, told the independent broadcaster NDTV. “That economy can't grow without economic activity actually happening.”

India's economy has been growing at an annual rate of around 7 percent for several years, among the fastest of any major economy.

*Rick Gladstone contributed reporting from New York.*



# Bitcoin could help Iran subvert sanctions

*IRAN, FROM PAGE 1*

Several well-known trading sites are now blocking buyers and sellers from Iran. Some have confiscated money belonging to clients based in Iran.

“Treasury will aggressively pursue Iran and other rogue regimes attempting to exploit digital currencies,” the department said in a statement.

But by their nature, cryptocurrencies are uncontrolled by any person or entity. At best, efforts to regulate or monitor trade in them are episodic, whack-a-mole affairs. With Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, there is simply no way to duplicate the banking sanctions that have proved so damaging to the Iranian economy.

Bitcoin transactions are recorded on a digital ledger or database known as the blockchain, maintained communally by many independent computers. The system is designed explicitly to avoid central banks and large financial institutions. Like emails delivered without going through a central postal service, the computer network maintaining Bitcoin records enables the movement of money without going through any central authority.

The Iranian government has been slow to recognize the potential sanctions-evading possibilities of Bitcoin. But it is now considering the establishment of exchanges to facilitate trading, one official, Abdolhassan Firouzabadi, said recently. Despite the failure of Venezuela's state-backed cryptocurrency, the Petro, Iran's central bank said recently that it was seriously considering creating something similar, possibly called the Crypto-Rial, which is named after the national currency, the rial.

Still, Iran's venture into Bitcoin pales in comparison to what has been happening in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, where thousands of people have jumped into the cryptocurrency business.

At the computerized processing operation in the Iranian desert, no one seemed particularly concerned with the geopolitical implications of Bitcoin.

The operation consisted of 2,800 computers from China, fitted into eight containers, which when linked are called a farm. It makes intense mathematical calculations, known as mining, needed to confirm Bitcoin transactions. Miners collect fees in Bitcoin for their services.

Ignoring the rain, the European visitor used the calculator on his mobile phone to determine how much money



Clockwise from top: A Bitcoin processing site in the desert outside Tehran; Ziya Sadr, who engineers website products for foreign clients, said he probably wouldn't be able to get paid if it weren't for Bitcoin; and inside the Bitcoin processing site.

could be made from this particular farm, multiplying computer power and deducting electricity and operational costs.

He estimated about five Bitcoins a month, which at roughly \$4,000 per Bitcoin at current price levels, would be about \$20,000.

“Not too bad,” he said.

The currency fluctuates like any other, though it has proved particularly volatile, sinking to slightly less than \$4,000 a unit from nearly \$20,000 about a year ago.

“We'll have two engineers on site to keep everything running, that's it,” said Behzad, the chief executive of IranAsic, the company running the site. He, like

the European investor, did not want to provide his family name, out of fear of penalties from the United States.

The Chinese computers, called Antminer V9s, were regarded as outdated by the European visitor. Still, he said, “I guess this is the last place on earth where they are still profitable.”

That helps explain why Iran seems to

be taking its first baby steps toward becoming a global center for mining Bitcoins. Because of generous government subsidies, electricity — the energy for the computers needed to process cryptocurrency transactions — costs little in Iran. It goes for about six-tenths of a cent per kilowatt-hour, compared with an average of 12 cents in the United States and 35 cents in Germany.

In recent months, dozens of foreign investors from Europe, Russia and Asia have considered moving their mining operations to Iran and other low-cost countries like Georgia.

Along on the inspection tour was a self-described “hard-core Bitcoiner,” Ziya Sadr, a bearded 25-year-old with a beanie and a backpack full of hard drives and USB keys containing his personal stash of the currency. “It helps me to pay to outsource jobs, or allows foreign companies to pay me,” he said.

Mr. Sadr said he was currently engineering website products for foreign clients and getting paid in Bitcoin. “These are not huge projects,” he said, “but had it not been for Bitcoin, I wouldn't have been able to get the contracts and get paid here in Iran.”

Had Mr. Sadr tried any of these transactions through conventional financial institutions, his account would likely have been blocked.

While Mr. Sadr's transactions are small, some larger companies are starting to use Bitcoin to make payments and circumvent the sanctions. Some European and Asian governments opposed to the Trump administration's decision to renounce the nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions are increasingly cooperative.

Late last month, Britain, France and Germany introduced a financial mechanism in the form of a company called Instex that would essentially allow goods to be bartered between Iranian companies and foreign ones without direct financial transactions or using the dollar. By avoiding the American banking system and currency, the hope is that European companies and others will feel confident that they can do business with Iran without being subject to the sanctions.

“There is no other way for us. Bitcoin cannot be sanctioned by anyone,” said Mr. Sadr, who has discussed Bitcoin with Iranian government officials.

Not quite. As its recent imposing of sanctions on two digital currency addresses, or wallets, and their two Irani-

an owners showed, the United States Treasury can disrupt cryptocurrency trades, even if only a minuscule fraction of the total. New anonymous wallets can be created for free within minutes.

The Treasury's move came after the Justice Department had indicted two other Iranians on charges of having used “Samsam” ransomware in a sophisticated scheme of attacks on American hospitals, government agencies and the city of Atlanta.

During the attack on Atlanta, one of the most serious cyberattacks against a major American city, the pair broke into its computer systems and held the data hostage, eventually ransoming it for about \$51,000 worth of Bitcoin. They made around \$6 million in Bitcoin from the attacks, prosecutors said.

**The Bitcoin system is designed explicitly to avoid central banks and large financial institutions.**

When the hackers wanted to exchange their Bitcoin for Iranian rials, they contacted two local traders through WhatsApp. The traders, Ali Khorashadizadeh, 29, and Mohammad Ghorbaniyan, 31, exchanged some into rials.

When on Nov. 28 a friend told Mr. Ghorbaniyan that his name was in the news, he thought it was a mistake. He discovered that the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control had placed him and Mr. Khorashadizadeh under sanctions, as well as the Bitcoin addresses they had used. Those addresses had been linked to their websites, making their names traceable.

“Please let it be known that, like every trader or bank, I have no knowledge how my clients get their money,” Mr. Ghorbaniyan said. “I just trade. I'm not a hacker. I have nothing to do with those guys.”

By the next week, however, Mr. Ghorbaniyan was back in business, using a new — this time anonymous — Bitcoin address he created in five minutes.

“Perhaps my name remains sanctioned, but we don't use names online,” he said.

Mr. Ghorbaniyan said his only mistake had been making his Bitcoin address public. “Basically, Treasury just Googled me,” he said. “I'm not making the same mistake again.”

# The case of the bumbling spy

**Watchdog group shocks private undercover agent by setting its own trap**

BY RONEN BERGMAN AND SCOTT SHANE

Citizen Lab, a cybersecurity watchdog organization at the University of Toronto, has published hard-hitting research on powerful targets in recent years: Chinese government censorship, Silicon Valley's invasion of customers' privacy, despotic regimes' electronic surveillance of dissidents. It's the kind of work that can make enemies.

So when John Scott-Railton, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab, got an odd request for a meeting last month from someone describing himself as a wealthy investor from Paris, he suspected a ruse and decided to set a trap.

Over lunch at New York's five-star Peninsula Hotel, the white-bearded visitor, who said his name was Michel Lambert, praised Mr. Scott-Railton's work and pried for details about Citizen Lab. Then — “as I was finishing my crème brûlée,” Mr. Scott-Railton said — a reporter and photographer from The Associated Press, alerted by Mr. Scott-Railton and lurking nearby, confronted the visitor, who bumped into chairs and circled the room while trying to flee.

At least two other men nearby appeared to be operatives — one who stood at the door, another who seemed to be filming from a table, said Mr. Scott-Railton, who himself filmed his lunch companion.

The case of the bumbling spy is the latest episode involving undercover agents, working for private intelligence firms or other clients, who adopt false identities to dig up compromising information about or elicit embarrassing statements from their targets.

“Michel Lambert” is a pseudonym, and the Paris company he claimed to represent does not exist. The New York Times, in collaboration with Uvda, an investigative television show on Israel's Channel 12, has confirmed that the mysterious visitor was Aharon Almog-Assoulin, a retired Israeli security official who until recently served on the town council in a suburb of Tel Aviv.

Contacted by The Times on Sunday, he said, “I do not have any interest in continuing with this conversation” and hung up. Mr. Scott-Railton, shown a photograph of Mr. Almog-Assoulin, said he was certain it was the man he had met.

The phenomenon of private spies drew widespread attention in 2017, when Black Cube, an Israeli private intelligence firm, was found to have used undercover agents to approach women who had accused Harvey Weinstein, the

**Spies try to elicit embarrassing statements from their targets.**

Hollywood producer, of sexual misconduct. Black Cube later was identified as having sent agents, again under false cover, to investigate Obama administration officials who had worked on the Iran nuclear deal.

Black Cube denied that it had played any role in approaching Citizen Lab employees, but the same undercover agent turned up in an earlier case in Canada with a Black Cube connection.

In October 2017, a man who resembles Mr. Almog-Assoulin appeared in Toronto, using another pseudonym, to meet someone involved in long-running litigation between Catalyst Capital Group and West Face Capital, two feuding private equity firms. The person, who asked not to be identified to avoid further legal trouble, said that when he saw the photo of “Michel Lambert” in an As-

sociated Press story on Jan. 26, he immediately recognized him as the man who had approached him, given him a false business card and questioned him about the lawsuits.

In court papers, Catalyst Capital has acknowledged that to provide support for its litigation, its law firm engaged a company that subsequently hired Black Cube as a subcontractor.

Asked by The Times whether Mr. Almog-Assoulin has worked for Black Cube, the company and its lawyer replied with letters threatening legal action and saying the company had no part in the Citizen Lab case. The letters did not directly answer multiple questions on Mr. Almog-Assoulin's role.

At the lunch with Mr. Scott-Railton, the supposed Mr. Lambert had asked repeated questions about one aspect of Citizen Lab's work: a series of damning reports since 2016 on NSO Group, an Israeli company that makes surveillance software used by multiple governments to spy on their opponents, including a friend of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist who was murdered by Saudi government agents in October. The company has received extensive media coverage, including in The Times, often citing the Citizen Lab work.

A spokesman for NSO Group denied that the company had any connection to the Citizen Lab encounters.

“NSO had absolutely nothing to do with this incident — either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, we did not hire Black Cube or anyone else to investigate Citizen Lab's activities and we did not ask any person or organization to hire Black Cube or any other person or firm to investigate Citizen Lab,” the spokesman said. He said NSO is “quite familiar with Citizen Lab's shoddy ‘research’ and its philosophical opposition to our work helping intelligence agencies fight terrorism and crime.”

Mr. Scott-Railton was especially alert to the possibility that Citizen Lab might be a target of hostile attention because a colleague of his, Bahr Abdul Razzak, had been approached by a different undercover agent. Mr. Abdul Razzak quickly determined that the name and company that the visitor had given were false, and he warned other Citizen Lab workers to watch for similar approaches. In both cases, according to the Citizen Lab employees, the mysterious visitors claimed to have money to invest and asked questions about Citizen Lab's work. They also seemed to be trying to provoke the Citizen Lab researchers into making anti-Semitic or otherwise offensive comments.

Mr. Scott-Railton noted that private intelligence companies often claim that they target only wrongdoers and act ethically and legally. “Well, the conduct of those who commissioned this work against Citizen Lab, and whoever executed it, crosses every ethical and moral line,” he said.



## TREAT YOURSELF TO A PERFECT TRIP IN BUSINESS CLASS

Travel in comfort and style with the Best Airline in Central Asia and India. Enjoy direct flights to and from Kazakhstan with convenient connections across Eurasia and a new range of Business Class fares.



TRAVELLERS' CHOICE REGIONAL AIRLINE - ASIA



A mysterious visitor to New York who claimed to be an investor named Michel Lambert is actually Aharon Almog-Assoulin, a retired Israeli security official.



WORLD

Measuring the room in 2020 for a centrist

Moderate Democrats risk crowding each other out if too many try to run

BY ALEXANDER BURNS

Howard Schultz, the former Starbucks chief executive contemplating an independent run for president, stated it as a plain matter of fact: For someone with his views — a distinctly white-collar blend of conservative fiscal instincts and liberal social values — there is no suitable political party.

That would come as news to the eight or nine Democrats who may seek their party's presidential nomination on versions of that very platform.

They call themselves moderates and problem-solvers, consensus-builders and pragmatists. Monochrome and male, they do not embody social change and few hold out the promise of making history. Among them are former mayors, like Michael R. Bloomberg of New York and Mitch Landrieu of New Orleans; current and former governors, including John Hickenlooper of Colorado and Terry McAuliffe of Virginia; Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado; and a smattering of House members. Atop the pack is a former vice president: Joseph R. Biden Jr.



ELISE AMENDOLA/ASSOCIATED PRESS



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michael R. Bloomberg, top, and Joseph R. Biden Jr., above, are among the moderates who might become candidates.

If they run, these Democrats would test whether there is a large audience of primary voters open to promises of incremental change and political compromise, or whether the ascendant more leftist liberal wing is now fully dominant, defining the party's agenda around transformational goals like enacting single-payer health care and breaking up big banks.

In most cases, these centrist Democrats are framing their moderate instincts in terms of political process — stressing their willingness to cooperate with Republicans — or fiscal and economic concerns, including sensitivity to private business and government debt. They largely agree with more liberal Democrats on issues like guns, abortion and gay rights, which once divided the party.

Mr. Bloomberg offered an uncommonly tart rendition of this cohort's worldview in New Hampshire on Tuesday, warning that a “Medicare for all” health care policy would “bankrupt” the country. He also dismissed a proposal by Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, to impose an annual wealth tax on enormous personal fortunes, as “probably unconstitutional.” Ms. Warren engaged the fight, branding Mr. Bloomberg on Twitter as a billionaire who wants to “keep a rigged system in place.”

If Mr. Bloomberg's views grate on many Democrats, allies see it as a distinctive trait in a diffuse primary. Howard Wolfson, an adviser to the former mayor, said the current Democratic field seemed to invite a competitor closer to the center.

“We believe that there is a clear and sufficiently wide lane for a pragmatic candidate, and that the progressive lane is really crowded,” Mr. Wolfson said. “The pragmatic lane is relatively free.”

Polls suggest that somewhere between a third and half of Democratic voters see themselves as moderates, though the label is vague enough to cast doubt on the group's cohesion.

That bloc, these candidates and their advisers acknowledge, could lose influence if a herd of professed pragmatists end up stampeding into the Democratic contest, atomizing the center even as progressive competitors carve up the left.

In the early primary states, much of the action so far has focused on proudly liberal, potentially history-making candidates, including Ms. Warren and Senators Kamala Harris of California and

Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

But former Gov. John Lynch of New Hampshire, a centrist Democrat, said he saw a clear opening for a candidacy pitched at the middle, one that is attentive to matters like climate change but also sensitive to deficits and debt. Mr. Lynch named Mr. Biden and Mr. Bloomberg as the two most compelling possibilities.

“I'd like to see somebody come in and make the case for electing a more moderate candidate,” Mr. Lynch said, “and I believe that if the Democrats want to beat President Trump, their best bet is electing somebody in the middle.”

Mr. Lynch cautioned that the chances for an avowed moderate would fade if too many people compete for the label: “If there are a couple of moderates, then they are going to take share away from each other.”

The road to the Democratic nomination would likely be fraught for any moderate, especially one who would not break a historic barrier by virtue of identity, as Barack Obama did in 2008. To some Democrats, a more centrist message might too closely echo Hillary Clinton's unsuccessful 2016 campaign, which left many in the party determined to focus on mobilizing the left over pursuing the middle. And the most vocal Democratic factions have shown little interest so far in settling for something other than a liberal champion, on issues from taxation and business regulation to criminal justice and gender equality.

Ms. Warren has emerged as something of an intellectual pacesetter for liberal Democrats on economic issues, including her proposal to tax the wealth of households with assets greater than \$50 million at a rate of two or three percent per year. And on Monday, Ms. Harris, whose signature proposal has been a more conventional middle-class tax cut, called in a CNN interview for the elimination of private health insurance as part of a shift toward a Medicare for all single-payer health care.

Several other liberals of differing stripes are likely to join the race soon, including Senators Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Cory Booker of New Jersey; others are considering it seriously, like Senators Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Jeff Merkley of Oregon.

Polls of Democratic voters offer mixed signals about how far left they want their nominee to be. There is no question the party has moved leftward: the Gallup Poll found last month that for the first time in decades, a majority of Democrats describe themselves as liberal, while just 34 percent now call themselves moderate. And taxing the rich is broadly popular, with a sizable majority of Americans believing wealthy people and corporations pay too little to the government.

“People have grown more liberal and more willing to call themselves liberal,” said Lydia Saad, a senior editor at Gallup, cautioning that ideology did not necessarily predict voting behavior: “The public is very fungible in terms of who they will accept as a leader, based on things that seem to go beyond ideology.”

Arkadi Gerney, a Democratic strategist who runs the Hub Project, a liberal advocacy group that has focused heavily on taxes, said that intensive issue polling had consistently found powerful support for raising taxes on the wealthy, not just among Democrats but also among working-class white voters in Mr. Trump's base.

“The thing that was consistently the most popular in those experiments was: raise taxes on the rich,” Mr. Gerney said. “It is tapping into anger that a lot of people have.”

Yet there are also signs of hesitation among some Democrats about shifting left. A January study by the Pew Research Center found that 53 percent of Democrats want the party to become more moderate, compared with 40 percent who want it to move more to the left.

A Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that while single-payer health care is hugely popular among Democrats, half of the party's voters want House Democrats to prioritize improving the Affordable Care Act over passing the Medicare for All Act.

Mr. Biden and Mr. Bloomberg, both 76, have defended their relatively centrist approach in recent weeks, calling it the best way to win and govern. Mr. Biden described working with Republicans as a first principle at a Washington event last week; without that spirit, he said, “I don't know how you get anything done.” And Mr. Bloomberg swatted at the left more bluntly in New Hampshire.

Matt Bennett, vice president of the centrist Democratic group Third Way, said that for any moderate to catch fire in 2020, it would require more than offering toned-down versions of liberal candidates' policies and “eat your peas” lectures about government debt.

“They're going to have to be aspirational, optimistic, future-oriented,” Mr. Bennett said. “Like Bill Clinton, like Barack Obama.”



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARAH SILBJER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump plans to visit Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach, Fla., this weekend for the first time since Thanksgiving. The club is an oasis for those who adore all things Trump.

Trump's gilded comfort zone

WASHINGTON

At his Florida resort, the president loves to play host to adoring crowds

BY KATIE ROGERS AND ANNIE KARNI

After two months spent scorching the earth in Washington and complaining about being cooped up in the White House, President Trump is planning to return this weekend to the one place where he knows he will receive a hero's welcome for his troubles: Mar-a-Lago, his gilded club by the sea in Palm Beach, Fla..

“You would have to be insensitive not to be touched by how he has stayed there working,” said Toni Holt Kramer, the founder of Trumpettes USA, a booster group that is planning to welcome him. “I think people will have tears in their eyes because they're so grateful that he's come back to his home away from home.”

Mr. Trump made a point of staying in Washington over the Christmas holidays — waiting, he said, for Democrats to negotiate with him on funding for a border wall — so it will be the president's first visit to Mar-a-Lago since Thanksgiving.

It will not be a complete escape — he still has no deal on the wall and a State of the Union address to give on Tuesday. But Mr. Trump is expected to do many of the things he always does when he is at Mar-a-Lago: dining at the owner's table on the patio; spending the afternoon at Trump International Golf Club, about a 15-minute motorcade drive away; and never venturing anywhere in Palm Beach outside his own two properties.

The first lady, Melania Trump, will travel there with him, her spokeswoman said, though Mrs. Trump tends to keep a low profile while at the resort.

In the Mar-a-Lago cocoon, the president is in his most comfortable mode, friends and allies say: playing the jocular host in front of an adoring crowd.

On Saturday, P.J. Schrantz, who founded Veleve, a charity that provides support for veterans, is betting on Mr. Trump to make an appearance at a \$600-a-plate fund-raiser his organization is hosting in one of the club's ballrooms. And plans for Mr. Trump's annual Super Bowl viewing party at his golf club on Sunday evening, complete with a steak and lobster buffet, are still on.

“I chose to have it there because I've attended galas there,” Mr. Schrantz said of his event, which will feature a George Michael tribute artist donating his time, and which will also honor the astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

“The members are such giving people that we could raise a couple of million dollars in an evening,” he said.

Some Mar-a-Lago members say they are already wistful about the blissful weeks without tangled traffic and increased security — a seven-minute drive from home to the club takes at least 30 minutes when Mr. Trump is in town, one said — but many will brave the roads for the chance to participate in a presidential selfie or a similar show of support.

Laurence Leamer, a longtime Palm Beach resident who has known Mr. Trump since the 1990s and is the author of “Mar-a-Lago: Inside the Gates of



Greeting the Trump motorcade in November. Mr. Trump made a point of staying in Washington over Christmas.

Power at Donald Trump's Presidential Palace,” said in an interview that even if people had an issue with the president's policymaking, the meatloaf recipe or anything in between, they tended to keep it to themselves.

“People have been trained to have like a Pavlovian reaction or something,” Mr. Leamer said. “You're supposed to say things are great. When he asks you, ‘How are things?’ you're not supposed to complain.”

Just as the Trump International Hotel in Washington has become a safe space for the president and his supporters, Mar-a-Lago is a 20-acre oasis for those who adore all things Trump, from his zero-tolerance immigration policies to the menu items named after his children.

“I think people will have tears in their eyes because they're so grateful that he's come back to his home away from home.”

The focus on Mr. Trump has grown to the point where some Democratic members, who have loved the club's amenities for decades, have recently rescinded their memberships because they do not feel comfortable there anymore.

“There's a political angle to being a member now,” said Cynthia Friedman, a Democratic fund-raiser who joined the club 24 years ago and recalls playing tennis on Saturdays with Marla Maples, Mr. Trump's second wife. “There are a lot of people who I don't recognize. They're not the people I used to play tennis with. Things change, and it's time to move on.”

In December, instead of sending her \$1,600 in monthly dues, she joined the Beach Club, a rival members-only club, on the other side of town. But Ms. Fried-

man is still in the minority.

Many Mar-a-Lago members book reservations weeks in advance to be in the same room with the president. And Trumpworld celebrities, like Anthony Scaramucci, the former White House communications director; the president's son Donald Trump Jr.; and Antonio Sabato Jr., the Trump-loving model-turned-politician, have been spotted at social events and fund-raisers in Palm Beach, serving as something of a warm-up act to the main event.

Karyn Turk, a business owner and the 2016 winner of the Mrs. Florida beauty pageant, said if the walls looked like they were caving in on the president in Washington, there were only blue skies in Palm Beach.

“It's a lot of hype,” she said of the special counsel investigation, led by Robert S. Mueller III. “I feel like in a lot of ways, it's still just a witch hunt.”

If the “Winter White House” is a boon for the members of Mr. Trump's exclusive club, and a respite not only for the president but also for the staff members who relocate with him, the annual decampment still raises ethical concerns. The White House has refused to release a list of those who visit the president there. And elsewhere in the Trump Organization orbit, the company said it would introduce new procedures to screen for undocumented immigrants after The New York Times reported that Mr. Trump's flagship New Jersey golf club employed people who had entered the country illegally.

And ProPublica reported last summer that three Mar-a-Lago members had amassed an unusual amount of influence in the Department of Veterans Affairs, meddling in agency initiatives and participating in the review of a contract worth some \$10 billion.

“It certainly seems unprecedented,” said Noah Bookbinder, the executive director of the ethics watchdog CREW,

“and highly troubling for people to be given significant authority over government matters seemingly primarily on the basis of being paying customers of the president.”

The White House has taken at least one informal step to block people who have access to the president's properties from asking for anything that seems to go too far. Aides have long been on the alert to intercept notes or policy proposals from overeager supporters — including one from a guest who once helpfully tried to show the president an executive order he had drafted. Mr. Trump has at times directed his aides to give those people ample listening time even if he cannot, according to someone familiar with the process and his thinking.

Security around the president may have tightened since 2017, when Mr. Trump sat on the open patio, in front of hundreds of eyeballs and iPhones pointed in his direction, discussing a response to North Korea's missile test with Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister.

But in many ways, Mr. Trump himself has not changed from the involved club owner he has always been.

He has always kept close watch over who comes and goes, and pays close attention to those in the latter category.

Jeff Greene, the Palm Beach billionaire who ran unsuccessfully in the Democratic primary for governor of Florida, joined the club when he moved to Palm Beach in 2010. But he quit because, he said, “I have my own tennis court. I never loved going there.”

Mr. Trump, he said, took his resignation personally. Sitting next to him at a charity event at Mar-a-Lago, Mr. Greene recalled being confronted.

“He went right at me, saying, ‘I can't believe you quit the club.’ He's figuring someone with plenty of money, why would they care about paying dues for a club?”

CORRECTIONS

• An article on Thursday about the police reaction to Yellow Vest protesters in France referred incorrectly to police use of rubber balls against demonstrators in Western Europe. It is authorized in France, Northern Ireland and Spain. It is not the case that only France and

Northern Ireland use such tools.

• A biographical note on Jan. 9 with a review of Mesha Maren's “Sugar Run” misstated the title of the most recent novel by the reviewer, Charles Frazier. It is “Varina,” not “Vienna.”



# In jail and dying, she was ignored

GOSHEN, IND.

Woman’s death underlines dire conditions for sick inmates in United States

BY SARAH MASLIN NIR

“Offender Dockery stated to me around 0800 at the front counter that she was having stomach pains for 2 days and wanted to go to the hospital,” read the first entry in a corrections officer’s log. It was the first of what became multiple pleas for help by a newly arrived inmate, Lamekia Dockery. The response? “I advised her to stop over-talking me.” For the six days she was incarcerated at the Elkhart Community Corrections work-release facility last July, Ms. Dockery, vomiting and unable to eat, asked for medical attention, to no avail. “She sprawled out on the floor stating she couldn’t breathe,” reads an entry at 12:10 p.m. the next day. “She seemed to be talking just fine.”

She was dying. Ms. Dockery’s death at age 36 underscores the dangers of the nation’s jails, where inmates are either doing time for the least serious crimes or have not been convicted of the charges against them. Jails often have fewer resources than prisons and, like the work-release center here in Goshen, lack medical staff. Illness and injury can go untreated and every week, it seems, brings a new report of an unsafe jail or a death that was likely preventable.

“It would be a national scandal if people realized exactly how bad it was and how much abuse inmates are subjected to when they become sick inside prisons and jails,” said William R. Claiborne, a lawyer in Savannah, Ga., who specializes in cases of inadequate medical care, such as one in which an inmate was told he was faking fainting spells, only to die of congestive heart failure. “The more marginalized that you are, the more likely you are to not be believed, the more likely you are to get denied care,” Mr. Claiborne said.

The problem is worse, he said, for those already discounted by society: As a black woman and a drug user, Ms. Dockery was in that category. Jails have not adapted to the growth of the number of female inmates, which has far outpaced the growth in the number of men, according to the Vera Institute of Justice, a group that advocates criminal justice changes and is focused on jail. Experts say that racial bias has contributed to worse health outcomes for black women.

In 2015, Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old black woman jailed after a traffic stop in Waller County, Tex., hanged herself in a cell. In December in Bexar County, Tex., Janice Dotson-Stephens, who was black and mentally ill, was “ignored to death,”



VIA CHARMEL DOCKERY

as her lawyer put it, after her family had been told that she was not even in custody.

Ms. Dockery was sent to the work-release center for just shy of a year after she violated probation on a shoplifting conviction. Because she had failed a drug test on arrival, officers dismissed her complaints as those of a user in withdrawal, an ordeal that is rarely life-threatening.

But she died of sepsis, probably caused by a perforated ulcer in her intestine, according to James P. Elliott, the Elkhart County coroner.

Inmates said in interviews that Ms. Dockery begged for aid incessantly. Officially, she requested help at least a half-dozen times, according to internal emails and logs kept by corrections officers, which repeatedly noted her vomiting, moaning in pain, or even screaming. In response, she was punished with demerits and solitary confinement. When she kicked a door in protest, she was shackled.

Ms. Dockery’s death might have been averted, had the guards and administra-

tors heeded her requests. But the Elkhart County prosecutor, Vicki E. Becker, declined to hold anyone criminally responsible. The guards were not culpable because “none of them expressed any belief that a stomachache could result in her death,” Ms. Becker said in an interview.

Staff members receive no medical training that could have helped them assess Ms. Dockery’s condition.

Her family believes her cries were dismissed because of who she was: “She was a black woman, and they say she was on drugs, so they looked down on her,” said Bertina Slaughter, Ms. Dockery’s aunt. “They didn’t think she was worth nothing,” Ms. Slaughter said. “But she was worth a lot to us.”

Court records in Missouri, Michigan and Indiana, in which Ms. Dockery is sometimes referred to as Laminika, show a number of arrests and guilty pleas for offenses like marijuana possession and retail fraud. She entered the work-release center in Goshen on July 25, 2018.

The center sits between Highway 33

15 minutes

Medical Health Watch

07/30/18

Laminika Dockery

TIME	OFFICER	What Is Offender Doing
1033	KCG	Shackled/Dbl locked sat in chair by scanner. Groaning/moaning in pain.
1039	KCG	Groaning in pain/kneeling in front of chair
1041	KCG	Rolling on floor/groaning
1048	KCG	Placed in holding 2/shackles off
1103	KCG	laying on mat
1110	JMS	Sleeping
1122	JMS	Sleeping
1140	JMS	Yelling screaming
1151	JMS	Prising, Yelling, Verbal

0420	JUN	sitting on floor
0435	JUN	
0523	NRJ	sitting on the floor
0545	JUN	complaining of being sore
0607	JUN	laying on the floor
0633	JUN	readjusting her bed
0655	ADG	laying down
0745	JUC	laying down
0751	JUC	Attempt to take out for shower
0834	KG	Ambulance Arrived
0841	KG	Ambulance Left

Lamekia Dockery, at left, with a relative. Ms. Dockery died within days of arriving at the Elkhart Community Corrections work-release center in Goshen, Ind. Above, logs from the center kept by guards that show a record of her complaints and her condition.

and an overgrown stream called Rock Run Creek. It is a low-slung building that houses inmates in two open-plan barracks, separated by sex. Inmates typically labor at a local factory, their whereabouts tracked by GPS ankle bracelets.

Ms. Dockery’s troubles began on arrival, when she was placed on a seven-day lockdown because she failed a drug test. Her blood contained benzodiazepine, amphetamine and methamphetamine, according to a toxicology report provided by the corrections facility. Withdrawal from such substances does not typically entail vomiting.

At any given time, there are between four and seven guards for the 323 inmates that can be held at Elkhart Community Corrections. That leaves few staff members available to accompany inmates to a medical facility.

“She wants to go to the hospital,” an officer named Jessica Newman wrote in an email to her supervisors on July 28. Ms. Newman added: “If you say to send her, third shift only has three on tonight.”

Ms. Newman did not respond to email

or telephone messages. Jose Solis, a guard whom Ms. Dockery named in a complaint, could not be reached.

Ms. Dockery spent much of her time on the floor of a communal bathroom, curled around a toilet, according to inmate interviews and official logs. She was written up for disobedience when she collapsed or refused to get up from a fetal position on the ground, and for “hooting and hollering.”

At one point, a guard instructed Ms. Dockery to seek out her caseworker for help, according to documents, but when another found her searching for her caseworker’s office, she was accused of lying and given 15 more days confinement.

When her wails disturbed the other prisoners, the guards locked her in what they called “the tank,” a solitary confinement cell. She refused to stop banging on the door. “I spun Dockery to her stomach and proceeded to shackle her and double lock the shackles,” a corrections officer recorded on July 30. “I ordered her to sit on her bunk and calm down.” She died the next day.

At a nearby church that many inmates are permitted to attend, many stood up on the Sunday after Ms. Dockery’s death and detailed what they had witnessed of her ordeal, several in tears, the pastor, Tony Brinson, said.

“She kept saying, ‘I’m going to die here,’” said a third inmate, who asked that her name not be used for fear of retribution.

In October 2018, Ms. Becker, the Elkhart County prosecutor, announced that there would be no criminal charges relating to Ms. Dockery’s death after an investigation by its homicide squad.

In Indiana’s criminal code, unlike in some other states, she said, inmates in correctional facilities are not considered dependents; Ms. Dockery’s caregivers are thus not criminally liable for failing to provide help.

“Do I want to see accountability? From the perspective of, no one should have to suffer like this, the answer is absolutely yes,” Ms. Becker said. “From the perspective of, is that something I have the power to control? Unfortunately not.”

# U.S. cracks down on ‘birth tourism’ businesses

Some Chinese couples were charged as much as \$100,000 for their trips

BY MIRIAM JORDAN

Three people who operated multi-million-dollar birth-tourism businesses in Southern California have been arrested in the biggest federal criminal probe ever to target the thriving industry, in which pregnant women come to the United States to give birth so their children will become American citizens.

The businesses coached their clients to deceive United States immigration officials and pay indigent rates at hospitals to deliver their babies, even though many of the clients were wealthy, investigators said. Some Chinese couples were charged as much as \$100,000 for a birth-tourism package that included housing, nannies and shopping excursions to Gucci.

A tip sheet for customers, titled “Strategies to Maximize the Chance of Entry,” recommended stating on a visa application that pregnant mothers intended to stay at the “5-star” hotel, “Trump International Waikiki Beach,” to convince immigration officials that they were well-to-do vacationers, not mothers traveling with the intention of giving birth on American soil, investigators said.

Grand jury indictments unsealed in United States District Court in Los Angeles in the past week brought the total number of people charged in the schemes to 19, including both business operators and clients. But some of those named in the indictments were not currently in the United States, investigators said.

The appeal of bearing an American child, long associated with immigrants who enter the country illegally, has spurred a birth-tourism industry that now caters to people from all over the world. The industry is growing at a galloping pace, especially among Chinese nationals experiencing uncertainty over their country’s long-term economic prospects, investigators said. The number of businesses in operation is undoubtedly much larger than the three agencies targeted in the latest indictments in the Los Angeles area, said Mark Zito, assistant special agent in

charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations in Los Angeles.

“We are talking about three take-downs in L.A., when there are probably 300,” Mr. Zito said. “We have seen more businesses pop up. It is probably going stronger now than it was in 2015.”

While the agencies charged in the current investigation cater mainly to Chinese parents, Mr. Zito said that investigators have also found evidence of Russians heading to the northeastern United States and Nigerians traveling to Texas for the sole purpose of having American children. The Middle East is also a growing generator of birth tourism, investigators said.

“We are trying to quell this, but it is increasing. Other nations will start taking advantage of this,” Mr. Zito said.

The phenomenon of so-called anchor babies has fueled criticism from advocates of tougher immigration laws who are concerned that foreign adults are using their children to secure permanent residency in the United States and from there, access to public benefits.

The indictments unsealed Thursday include an array of charges, including visa fraud, wire fraud and identity theft, against owners of the birth-tourism agencies that are accused of enabling thousands of Chinese women to come explicitly to give birth to American children.

“Statements by the operators of these birthing houses show contempt for the United States, while they were luring clients with the power and prestige of U.S. citizenship for their children,” Nick Hanna, the United States attorney in Los Angeles, said in a statement. “Some of the wealthy clients of these businesses also showed blatant contempt for the U.S. by ignoring court orders directing them to stay in the country to assist with the investigation and by skipping out on their unpaid hospital bills.”

There are no official figures for how many babies are delivered to tourists on American soil. The Center for Immigration Studies, a group that supports restricting immigration, puts the number at about 36,000 annually in a 2015 report.

“The fact that we have no idea of the scale of birth tourism is a problem in and of itself,” said Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the center in Washington. “We should not tolerate an entire



JAE C. HONG/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal agents raiding a birth tourism business in 2015. The appeal of bearing an American child has spurred a global industry.

industry that encourages people to come here for the sole purpose of having a child who leaves with a U.S. passport.”

In recent years, the practice has prompted some lawmakers, who have opposed children of undocumented immigrants automatically becoming citizens, to propose repealing birthright citizenship, which is enshrined in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

President Trump last year claimed erroneously that the United States is the “only country in the world” that automatically confers citizenship to anyone born in the nation. In fact, it is one of at least 30 countries that do so.

Still, the United States has struggled to rein in birth tourism because it is not unlawful for foreigners who are pregnant to travel to the United States or to have babies in the country. “Birth tourism is a gray area of the law,” said Ms. Vaughan, who called “at the very least”

for a revision of citizenship rights to prevent those who are in the country for only the first few weeks of their lives from retaining citizenship for life.

China, home to a burgeoning moneyed class that includes many who are eager for a foothold in the United States, is the biggest market for the birth-tourism industry. The United States offers educational opportunities for their children and a haven in the event of political and economic instability in their home country.

The indictments allege that government officials, doctors and lawyers are among those traveling from China to the United States to have children.

The businesses were dismantled following raids in 2015 by the special agents on several California sites where the businesses housed pregnant women, in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange Counties. But it is not clear how

long the three birth-tourism agencies had been operating.

Dongyuan Li, a resident of Irvine, Calif., who ran a business called “You Win USA,” is accused in the indictment of renting about 20 units in a luxury apartment complex in Irvine under the names of people who did not occupy them as part of an “illegal international birth tourism scheme.” Clients spent a couple of months there before giving birth and were then replaced with newly arrived pregnant women, the charging document said.

On its website, Ms. Li’s company touted the benefits of having an American child, including a “most attractive nationality”; “priority for jobs in U.S. government, public companies and large corporations”; and the opportunity to immigrate to the United States once that child became an adult and could sponsor a parent for a green card.

The business, which advertised on its website that it had handled 500 births, charged each client \$40,000 to \$80,000 for a range of services that included coaching on how to respond to questions at a visa interview, fill out forms and disguise the true motive for travel from Customs officers at the airport on arrival, according to the indictment.

One customer is alleged to have falsely stated on a visa application that she would be spending 12 days at the “Trump International Hotel” in Hawaii.

You Win USA recommended that clients flew from China to Hawaii and then connected on a domestic flight to Los Angeles, their final destination, to clear passport control in Honolulu and avoid tougher scrutiny expected from officers in California.

It promised a refund to any customer who was not admitted into the country on arrival, according to the indictment.

The business arranged accommodation, prenatal care and shopping trips for the women. In some cases, the indictment said, it instructed clients to fabricate financial documents to enable them to obtain visa extensions, and it deposited money temporarily in their bank accounts.

Mr. Zito, the special agent, said clients were advised to claim they lacked insurance, which entitled them to pay the indigent rate at whichever hospital they used to deliver their babies.

In some cases, he said, the women returned to China and canceled their credit card to avoid paying even that rate, about \$4,000, which is a fraction of what it costs most women in the United States to deliver a baby.

At the same time, he noted, “they would have nannies and buy things at Gucci and Hermès at South Coast Plaza,” a high-end mall in Costa Mesa, Calif., where many shops have Mandarin-speaking attendants to help the numerous Chinese customers.

Ms. Li was arrested on Thursday, along with the operators of USA Happy Baby, another agency associated with birth tourism, according to the indictment: Michael Wei Yueh Liu, of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., and Jing Dong, of Fontana, Calif.

Another indictment charges Wen Rui Deng, operator of a business based in Los Angeles called Star Baby Care, believed to be the largest birth-tourism operation in the country.



# Business

## Start-ups help fight Indigenous stereotypes

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

### Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders drawn to entrepreneurship

BY ISABELLA KWAI

It was a disempowering experience at a large corporate organization that prompted Morgan Coleman to become an entrepreneur.

Initially, he was proud to work there. But soon, as one of the few Indigenous employees, he felt patronized and unwelcome by some, and worried that his manager resented him because of his Torres Strait Islander background.

Now, as part of a growing number of Indigenous Australians finding success in the entrepreneurial world even as the rate of non-Indigenous business ownership has fallen, he feels his future rides solely on his merit.

"Whether I succeed or not, it's entirely up to me," Mr. Coleman, 28, said in a recent interview at the Melbourne offices of Vets on Call, the app he left his corporate job to start. "The market doesn't care if you're Indigenous or not."

The number of Indigenous Australians operating and owning businesses grew by about 30 percent between 2011 and 2016, according to a 2018 paper from Australian National University.

And given that the Indigenous population is younger than that of the country over all — with a median age of about 23 — Indigenous entrepreneurs say they find business ownership both alluring and empowering.

That is particularly meaningful in a country that still struggles with the aftermath of racist policies that forcibly separated Indigenous children from their parents, refused Indigenous people the rights to their land and kept them from voting.

For many whose lives have been touched by trauma from these policies, entrepreneurship is not only a pathway toward building wealth — it is also an effort to combat stereotypes.

"We're not just good sports people — we're good science people, we're tech people," said Marsha Uppill, 45, an Adnyamathanha woman who founded the company Arranyinha. Sharing its title with her birth name in her Aboriginal people's language, her company is developing a tool that will help bridge cultural and other gaps between Western businesses and local and national Aboriginal communities.

For Mr. Coleman, whose Indigenous father was sent away during his childhood in the era of family separation, the stereotypes can cut both ways. His light skin has made him the subject of scorn at times from both white and Indigenous Australians, he said.

Although the rate of Indigenous business ownership still lags behind non-Indigenous ventures, in recent years the increase in those wanting to start their own ventures has been significant, according to Indigenous Business Australia, a government agency that provides support and loans for homeownership and business ventures.

These days, the agency approves about four times as many loans as it did six years ago, and most are given to first-time start-ups, said Wally Tallis, its deputy chief executive.

AUSTRALIA, PAGE 9

## Businesses brace for Brexit chaos

TELFORD, ENGLAND

### Lack of clarity over terms has British companies stockpiling their products

BY PETER S. GOODMAN

Filtermist, a company flush with business across Europe, is scrambling to fix a problem whose contours are maddeningly unknown. In less than 60 days, absent a sudden outbreak of amity in its domestic politics, Britain will crash out of the European Union without a deal spelling out what happens next.

Like the rest of British business, Filtermist, which makes devices that suck oil vapor out of factory air, cannot afford to simply wait and hope that everything works out. With the prospect of an unruly exit increasingly palpable, workers at a plant the company operates in Telford, a town in the Midlands of England, are rushing to assemble 800 clean-air units to stockpile in Europe.

Filtermist will ship the units to a factory in southern Germany, squarely within the European Union. Then, come what may — whether politicians in Britain and Europe strike a deal, or whether the bewildering torment known as Brexit yields border chaos — the company can rely on that stash to get its goods to European customers after March 29, the day Britain is supposed to leave the European bloc.

This is the tiresome yet unavoidable nature of business as Brexit shifts from a theoretical event to something real: Companies must plan for outcomes both wildly unknown and potentially damaging. Fearful of havoc, they are stockpiling products, exploring new shipping routes and making backup plans, all the while having no idea how the adventure will end.

"What are we contending with?" asks Filtermist's chief executive, James Stansfield. So long as he lacks an answer, his 50-year-old company will ship extra stock to Germany.

"It's meant extra resources, extra overtime, to get it done," he said. "Everybody's stockpiling. It's incredibly annoying. It's frustrating."

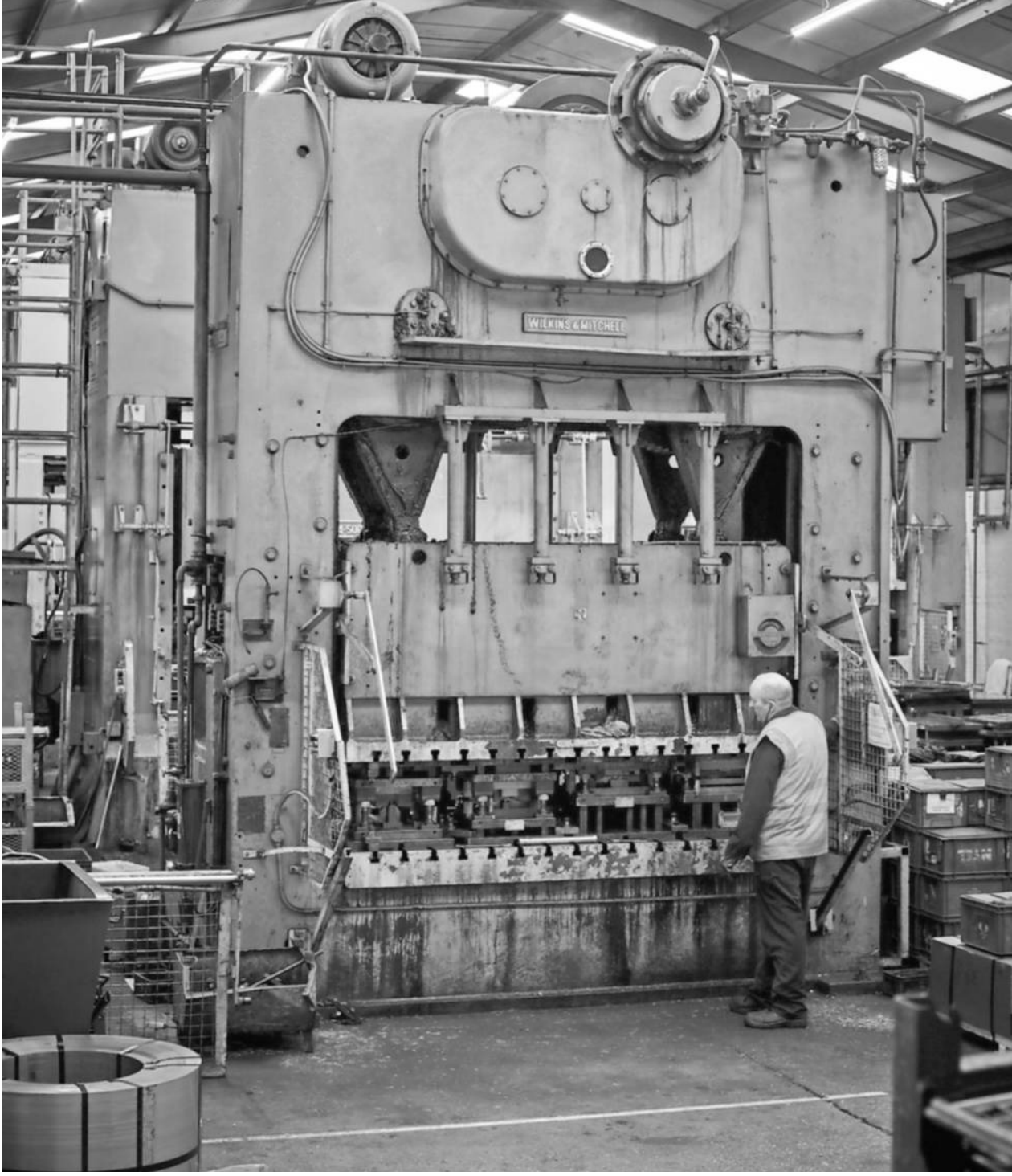
It also threatens to be expensive. The British economy is 2.3 percent smaller than it would have been absent the June 2016 vote that set Brexit in motion, according to a recent estimate from the Center for European Reform, a pro-European research institution.

The main culprit is the uncertainty that has discouraged commerce. Investment in the British auto industry plunged by nearly half last year as companies waited to see how Brexit would play out, a leading trade association said in the past week.

That uncertainty is intensifying in the face of an epic stalemate. Parliament voted down an unpopular exit deal that Prime Minister Theresa May had negotiated with European leaders. Some lawmakers oppose Mrs. May's agreement because it takes Britain out of the European common marketplace; others because it ties Britain too closely to Europe.

Parliament may yet approve Mrs. May's deal — she survived a critical vote Tuesday that could have delayed Brexit — especially if the primary alternative is a tumultuous no-deal departure. Britain might extend the deadline, hold another referendum on the question of leaving the European Union or even call the whole thing off. But barring the emergence of a majority behind a negotiated arrangement, Britain will leave with no deal.

That could profoundly alter the Euro-



Top, Pressmark Pressings, an auto parts maker, has increased its reserves of steel, above right, by half. Above left, James Stansfield, chief of Filtermist, which makes devices that suck oil vapor out of factory air. It plans to stockpile clean-air units in Germany.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUZIE HOWELL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

pean single market, a free trade area running from Ireland to Greece. Customs checks would almost surely be revived at British and European ports, bringing paperwork, inspections and other bureaucratic elements not likely to speed up the transit of goods.

Many companies that trade across the English Channel have been planning for a messy divorce while hoping to be

pleasantly surprised by a smoother separation.

Multinational banks now depend on rights within the European market that allow them to legally use offices in Britain to serve customers on the Continent. Brexit is likely to end that arrangement, so global banks have been shifting thousands of jobs from Britain to European banking centers.

Novo Nordisk, a Danish pharmaceutical company, provides more than half the insulin used by British residents with diabetes. The company makes most of its insulin near Copenhagen, trucking the product to the French port of Calais, where ferries carry it to the English port of Dover.

Normally, Novo Nordisk holds seven weeks' worth of stock at cold storage fa-

cilities in Britain. As the risk of a no-deal Brexit has risen, the company has increased that stockpile to a 16-week supply, said Pinder Sahota, the drugmaker's vice president for the United Kingdom. Novo Nordisk has booked airfreight shipments to ensure that it can get insulin to Britain even if sea lanes are disrupted.

"This is one of the major logistical challenges that our industry has ever faced," Mr. Sahota said.

Sanofi, a French pharmaceutical company, has also stockpiled medicines while shifting the required quality testing of batches of newly released drugs from Britain to the Republic of Ireland, a European Union member. That way, the company remains in compliance with European regulations.

"It's complicated and costly, and it's disruptive," said Hugo Fry, Sanofi's managing director for Britain.

Last week, the chief executive at Airbus, the European commercial jet manufacturer, escalated fears that a no-deal Brexit could cause a serious blow to the British economy, warning that it could force the company to shift the making of wings out of Britain.

"Make no mistake," said the chief executive, Tom Enders, in a video posted to YouTube. "There are plenty of countries out there who would love to build the wings for Airbus aircraft."

John Nollelt has grown weary of worrying about factors beyond his control. His company, Pressmark Pressings Ltd., makes auto parts at a factory in Atherstone, about 100 miles northwest of London. He and his partners bought the business in June 2016, closing on the purchase just a week after the Brexit referendum.

"We thought, 'It can't be catastrophic. The government will be prepared,'" he said. "But it's been a shambles, to be honest. There's still no clarity."

Roughly one-third of the factory's 92 workers are from Eastern European countries, including Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Latvia — all members of the European Union. As long as Britain remains within Europe, they have the right to stay and work in Britain.

But what happens in a no-deal Brexit? Limiting immigration was a primary aspiration among those who voted to leave Europe. Mr. Nollelt himself complains that "some of the immigrants we've had coming in don't fit with U.K. culture." If Brexit dislodges Eastern European workers, though, he frets that his labor costs could soar by as much as 30 percent.

He also worries about delays on the steel he imports from Belgium. The company makes parts for a supplier to a Nissan factory in northeast England. The supplier is obliged to deliver parts to Nissan every half-hour or face fines.

Pressmark has increased its reserves of steel by half to ensure that it has enough to last 15 days. The coils lie in a corner of the factory, on a grease-stained patch of concrete.

The company borrowed 200,000 pounds, or \$262,000, to finance the additional steel. This, combined with a dip in British auto sales, prompted Mr. Nollelt to delay buying new presses.

"Why would we want to invest in a plant if we are going to lose volume?" he asked. "You've got the uncertainty over Brexit."

At Filtermist, which is owned by a Swedish conglomerate, Mr. Stansfield has grown accustomed to phone calls from incredulous Swedish board members who assume that he, by dint of being English, must be able to divine the mysteries of Brexit.

"They call us and ask, 'What's happening? What's going to happen?'" he said. "And we have to tell them, 'We don't know.'"

## Italy slides into recession as Europe stalls, stoking global fears

BY JACK EWING AND JASON HOROWITZ

Italy has officially slipped into recession, and Europe as a whole is essentially at an economic standstill, raising anxieties that the world is on the verge of a significant slowdown.

The timing could not be worse. The lousy performance of the Italian economy, reported in the past week, is likely to aggravate relations between the European Commission and Italy's populist government, which has pursued spending policies widely regarded as irresponsible. Leaders on the Continent are already dealing with Britain's messy exit from the European Union.

At the same time, China's economy is slowing, in part because of President Trump's trade war. The data published by official statistics agencies provided a glimpse of just how intertwined China and Europe have become, and how vulnerable that leaves the eurozone. This weakness, in turn, adds to risks facing the United States, which is Europe's top trading partner.

In Italy, the government's debt load is one of the highest in the world. A prolonged economic slump would significantly add to the risk of default, with global repercussions.

The European Central Bank has in the past come to the rescue of Europe, and Italy in particular, but it has less scope to



GIANNI CIPRIANO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A market in Naples, Italy. Economists say the country's populist government has created uncertainty, prompting many Italians to spend less.

do so now. The bank is scaling back its purchases of government bonds, a stimulus measure that helped ensure that there were buyers for Italian government debt.

"We have weaker economic momentum, and at the same time the E.C.B. is getting out of the market," said Katharina Utermöhl, an economist at German insurer Allianz. "That means there is less room for policy mistakes."

Giuseppe Conte, the Italian prime minister, hardly reassured his European partners when he said Thursday that the economic setback had nothing to do with his government. "I am not worried in the least," Mr. Conte told reporters, calling the recession "temporary" and blaming a tariff war between the United States and China that had hurt Italy's No. 1 trading partner, Germany, and "will find us all losers."

The Italian economy shrank 0.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018 compared with the third quarter, Istat, the Italian statistics agency, said. It was the second quarter in a row of declining output and that, by one common definition, means a recession. It is Italy's third since 2008.

Growth in the eurozone itself was just 0.2 percent in the fourth quarter compared with the third quarter, the European Union statistics agency said. That rate matched the previous quarter's, and anemic as it is, it might have been worse but for Spain and France. Spain's economy grew at an unexpectedly strong clip, rising 0.7 percent in the fourth quarter compared with the third. And in France, where the government has been struggling with mass public protests over economic duress, growth hit 0.3 percent.

Economists agree with Mr. Conte on one point — that China's woes are weighing on Europe.

During the last decade, Europe profited from China's push to modernize its infrastructure.

China equals the United States as a customer for heavy-duty German machinery, like cranes, textile machines or equipment for steel mills, and companies like Volkswagen have made the country a priority.

Critics of the Italian government blame its economic policies at home for

its performance. Economists say the populist alliance has sowed uncertainty, prompting many Italians to spend less. A decline in consumer spending was a major culprit in the economy's setback.

Carlo Cottarelli, a former director of the International Monetary Fund who led a spending review of the previous Italian government, reviewed the statistics on Thursday and said the alliance, in power since June, was responsible for Italy's slide.

### In Italy, the government's debt load is one of the world's highest.

"This recession here, it can't be the fault of the previous government," he told a radio station in Padua.

After a protracted fight last year with Brussels, Italy's government increased spending for broader welfare programs and generous pensions. The government, pulling together its first budget, assured Europe that its growth would be much higher than estimated by experts — although it blocked major infrastructure projects that could stimulate growth.

Italian business leaders have become bolder in their criticism, as seen Wednesday when Mr. Conte hinted to a powerful business association in the northern Lombardy region that the new

economic figures might disappoint.

Carlo Bonomi, the group's president, implored the prime minister to stop governing from the "easy street" of electoral politics, and to introduce responsible economic policies.

"Stop this drift toward violence and hate, also rhetorical, that is starting to rend the fabric of Italian society," Mr. Bonomi said, in remarks that were broadcast on television news and in press reports.

Some analysts said that economic pain could be the only way to break the spell cast by Italian populists. But others warned that a struggling economy helped set the conditions that fueled the extreme parties' rise.

On Thursday, the Italian government wasted no time in blaming someone else, in this case, its predecessors.

"Today's data from Istat show a fundamental thing, that those who were in government before us lied to us," said Luigi Di Maio, the political leader of the Five Star Movement and Italy's economic development minister, speaking at a party event. "They never got us out of the crisis."

He predicted that government initiatives, including an expensive unemployment program, would soon increase employment.

Jack Ewing reported from Frankfurt and Jason Horowitz from Rome.





Above, workers heading home from the Changshuo factory in Huojiancun, China, where iPhones are assembled and inspected. Below, guards patrolling the factory grounds.

# Chinese workers feel Apple’s pain

HUOJIANCUN, CHINA

Tepid iPhone sales mean less pay for tech giant’s employees, so some quit

BY AILIN TANG

The line to quit stretched the length of a football field.

More than a hundred Chinese workers who once assembled and tested Apple iPhones queued up on a recent morning outside Gate 7 of the vast Changshuo electronics factory to collect their severance and go on their way. They had once hoped that their assembly-line jobs would give them big enough paychecks to propel them into a better life.

That was before consumers in China turned up their noses at Apple’s new iPhone XR and its nearly \$1,000 price. Work slowed. Overtime evaporated. And now workers are giving up.

“Usually we had 80 to 90 extra hours” per month, said Zhang Zhi, 25, who had worked two years at the factory but was now standing in the quitting line. Starting in late October, her supervisors started sending her home early and giving her two-day weekends, eating into her overtime. In December, her pay totaled about \$370, roughly half what she had made in the busiest months.

Ms. Zhang found part-time work elsewhere that pays about \$600 a month. Still, she said, “it’s better than staying here.”

China’s factories once made products for the rest of the world. These days, increasingly, Chinese factories make products for China as well. Its vast and still-emerging consumer class has opened up a hugely profitable market for global companies like Apple, Nike, General Motors and Volkswagen. Those companies in turn use Chinese factories to meet those needs.

Today, China’s consumers have grown more reluctant to spend, and many of the workers who depend on them have been hit. Lower demand for consumer



goods has led to job losses and shrinking paychecks. That is worsening China’s economic slowdown, which has posed a major challenge for Beijing and could put it at a disadvantage in the trade war with President Trump.

China doesn’t disclose reliable employment data, but signs of slowing factory work abound. Car and chemical factories are moving at a slower pace. China’s Lunar New Year holiday begins Tuesday, but some companies were sending home workers as early as December.

Huojiancun isn’t the only place where weak iPhone sales are leaving an impact.

In the Chinese city of Zhengzhou, employment at a vast factory that makes iPhones has fallen to about 70,000 from the already low pre-Lunar New Year level of more than 100,000 a year ago, according to China Labor Watch, which tracks working conditions and speaks to workers in China.

In a statement, the Zhengzhou factory’s owner, the Taiwanese electronics supplier Foxconn, declined to comment directly on the group’s figures but said it was constantly reviewing its operations and planned to add more than 50,000 positions across China in the first three months of the year.

An Apple spokeswoman, Wei Gu, declined to comment.

Huojiancun is a rough industrial community on the edge of glittering Shanghai. Snack shops, calling card stalls and other small businesses catering to factory workers pervade the narrow streets and alleys surrounding the Changshuo plant.

Workers there may make the iPhone, but they can’t afford it. Even when their pay was at its peak, those assembly-line workers would have needed more than a month’s wages to buy a base-level iPhone XR. Still, jobs there for years were in high demand because they tended to pay more and offer better working conditions than elsewhere.

Today, the situation is more complicated. Chinese workers are increasingly difficult to lure because they don’t want to work so many hours on an assembly line. Chinese companies are increasingly exploring automation as labor costs rise.

Supervisors kept workers from taking too many breaks and would dock their pay for infractions like littering, said Hou Fu’an, a Changshuo worker who had quit and was heading back home to the interior province of Henan. As workers began to leave over missing hours, he said, many remaining workers

started getting overtime again, fattening their paychecks but adding to the workload.

“Inside the factory, workers are tightly controlled,” Mr. Hou said. “If one person does not do well, everyone in the group will be yelled at by the group leader. But they did not yell much when there were not many workers left.”

The Changshuo plant is owned by Pegatron, a Taiwanese contract assembler. Its shares have lost nearly a quarter of their value since the summer as the trade war with the United States mounted and as skepticism grew about the appeal of Apple’s latest iPhone models, which were released in September.

A Pegatron spokeswoman, Ming-Chun Tsai, declined to comment on the Apple business.

Every year, before Apple’s usual September launches of its latest iPhones, the Changshuo factory adds temporary workers to accommodate the rush. It offers bonuses that can vary from \$400 to \$1,300 depending on demand.

Many workers then typically leave before the Lunar New Year holiday, when they generally qualify for their bonus. But workers and local businesses alike said more workers than usual were leaving this year.

Huang Qionghuang owns a stall that sells bras that won’t set off metal detectors, an essential undergarment in a factory that scans workers coming and going to make sure they aren’t stealing or smuggling in cameras to take photos of the latest iPhone. In the past, October was her busy season. But sales slumped in recent months, and she dares not buy more bras to stock.

“Last January, I earned more than my rent,” Ms. Huang said. “Now I can’t even make enough to pay the rent,” which she said was about \$500 a month.

At the line to quit at Gate 7, Wang Xiaofeng stood in the cold waiting for a severance that he hoped would total about \$150. A year ago, his work hours were relatively steady. But this December, his overtime dwindled.

Mr. Wang said he had found a new job, one that gave him more hours to pad his paycheck. “I made the right decision,” he said. “I do not regret it.”

# Facebook learns its limits in app dispute with rival

SAN FRANCISCO

BY MIKE ISAAC

When Facebook employees woke up on Wednesday morning, many found they could not perform even the most basic work tasks.

Their calendars were not working. Nor were campus maps that help people find their co-workers. They were unable to check Facebook’s latest shuttle bus schedule. And they could not see what the company’s cafeterias were serving for lunch.

That’s because those features run on Facebook’s internal, custom-built iPhone apps — and Apple had shut them all down, according to nine current and former employees of the companies, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

The situation stemmed from a dispute after Facebook violated Apple’s rules by publicly distributing a research app that allowed it to snoop on users’ online activity. When Apple discovered the transgression earlier in the week, it revoked Facebook’s special access to apps and updates that run on its iPhone software.

That immediately cut off Facebook’s 35,000 workers from its internal iPhone apps. And the problem snowballed when mobile apps like Workplace and Messenger — two internal communication tools — also stopped working, frustrating employees and resulting in hours of lost productivity.

Late Thursday, Apple relented and restored Facebook’s access. Yet the episode was a stark reminder of where the power really lies in the technology world. While Facebook is the world’s biggest social network, Apple controls the distribution of apps — including Facebook’s — on its phones. That power is a longstanding concern for Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s co-founder and chief executive, making his company beholden to the rules of others.

The spat underscored the tensions between two of Silicon Valley’s largest tech companies, which have competed for years over talent and new technologies. Recently, each has taken potshots at the other over data privacy, with Apple’s chief executive, Timothy D. Cook, trading slights with Mr. Zuckerberg in interviews. Facebook also worked last year with a public-relations firm, Definers Public Affairs, to urge reporters to scrutinize Apple and other tech companies. And Apple has made changes to some of its tech features that limit the ability of Facebook and others to track users.

Apple did not immediately have a comment on Thursday after reinstating Facebook’s access to its internal apps. In a statement, Facebook said it was “getting our internal apps up and running” and added, “To be clear, this didn’t have an impact on our consumer-facing services.”

In an interview on Wednesday, Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook’s chief operating officer, said of the dispute with Apple, “Obviously we want to be in full compliance with all of our partners.” She added that the Facebook research app at issue hadn’t been a secret and had been operated only with its users’ consent.

Apple may have also briefly demonstrated its power on Thursday with another Silicon Valley giant, Google. Like Facebook, Google had violated Apple’s rules by publicly distributing an app, Screenwise Meter, through a special Apple developer program. The internet search company said some of its internal apps that run on iPhone software were temporarily disrupted.

Two Google employees, who declined to be identified because they were not allowed to speak publicly on the matter, said iPhone apps for internal services like hailing a bus or viewing cafeteria information were not working. In addition, apps testing unreleased updates of Google products such as Gmail and Google Maps were unavailable, these

people said. The disruptions were earlier reported by the technology website The Verge.

A Google spokeswoman, Suzanne Blackburn, said in a statement that the company expected the issue to be resolved “soon.” A spokesman for Apple, Tom Neumayr, said it was working with Google to reinstate access “very quickly.” He declined to comment on whether Apple had revoked Google’s access or if it was a technical glitch.

Apple’s dispute with Facebook over the week was rooted in the social network’s practice of scooping up information on its users’ practices.

In 2013, Facebook acquired Onavo, an Israeli company that collected information on how customers used every app on their phones. Onavo’s findings helped Facebook executives predict which apps were rising and trending across App Stores.

Last year, Apple updated some of its privacy policies and forced Facebook to remove Onavo’s app from its App Store. But Onavo had other ways of collecting consumer data that bypassed some of Apple’s restrictions.

In 2016, the Onavo team had created a research app that vacuumed up all of a user’s phone and web activity; Facebook paid people ages 13 to 35 to install it. Then Facebook distributed the app



SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS



STEPHEN LAM/REUTERS

A spat has underscored tensions between Timothy D. Cook, top, the head of Apple, and Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s chief.

under an Apple program with a special approval process if apps are used only for internal testing.

On Tuesday, the technology news site TechCrunch published a report detailing Facebook’s research app and its public use, which violated the rules of Apple’s program. Facebook immediately pushed back on privacy concerns and said it was not tricking users with the research app.

“There was nothing ‘secret’ about this; it was literally called the Facebook Research App,” Arielle Argyles, a Facebook spokeswoman, said in a statement.

But Facebook had no comeback for sidestepping Apple’s rules. On Wednesday morning, Apple revoked Facebook’s “enterprise developer certificate” and paralyzed the social giant from deploying its internal iPhone apps.

After Apple’s revocation, employees inside Facebook became furious with the Onavo team, according to four people familiar with the deliberations.

Late Thursday, after Apple relented, Facebook employees began seeing the next day’s lunch menu again, as well as their calendars and their shuttle bus schedules. Still, they said, Apple had made its point.

Jack Nicas contributed reporting from New York, and Daisuke Wakabayashi from San Francisco.

# Indigenous Australians drawn to start-ups

AUSTRALIA, FROM PAGE 8

“Our demand is outstripping our ability to service our customers,” he said.

Australia’s government is also encouraging Indigenous entrepreneurship. In 2015, it introduced targets for awarding contracts to Indigenous businesses, and last year it unveiled new financial support, on top of an Indigenous Entrepreneurs Fund offering 90 million Australian dollars, or about \$65 million, in assistance. State government agencies are also chipping in.

That backing has been a lifeline for entrepreneurs like Ms. Uppill, who won a local government grant to help set up her business structure. “It’s been fantastic to have that support,” she said.

But others say that having to meet the criteria is slowing them down.

Mr. Coleman, who grew up in Victoria State in southeastern Australia, found that he was not eligible for government grants because he did not live in a remote area and had not been denied a loan from mainstream banks.

He was also excluded from some grants because his business is not directly aimed at Indigenous communities. So he has funded Vets on Call with his own assets. He has yet to make a profit, though the app is growing.

And many do not have assets or a financial safety net. “They haven’t got



ASANKA BRENDON RATNAYAKE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Morgan Coleman, left, a Torres Strait Islander, left the corporate world to start his own business after feeling unwelcome because of his Indigenous ethnicity.

that intergenerational wealth like the Bill Gateses or the Mark Zuckerbergs,” said Dean Foley, 30, of the Kamilaroi Aboriginal people, who founded Barayamal, a start-up accelerator for Indigenous entrepreneurs.

That has not stopped Indigenous Australians from pitching, designing and

brainstorming, he said. “It’s called sweat equity. You just have to work hard.”

That ethic drives Ms. Uppill, whose mother, a member of what came to be known as the Stolen Generations, was taken from her home in the South Australian Flinders Ranges when she was 7.

Ms. Uppill, who did not deeply understand her Adnyamathanha heritage until she revisited her home nation as a teenager, said she had not seen herself as an entrepreneur early on. But she was struck by the mind-set of her elders.

“Aboriginal people have always been entrepreneurs,” she said of an 80,000-year history in which her people have had to adapt to changing times. “That’s what we are — that’s how we survived.”

Similarly, Mr. Coleman had never worked in the tech field before starting Vets on Call, which allows pet owners to book home visits from veterinarians.

And Indigenous cultural values are also at the heart of ventures like Faebella, a luxury activewear start-up developed by Alisha Geary, 24, which features authentic Indigenous art designs. Ms. Geary, who is half Aboriginal and half Torres Strait Islander, has vowed to ensure that the artists are paid well for their work.

After a year of putting in his own sweat equity, Mr. Coleman is looking forward to taking three days off for his 29th birthday this month. But with app re-designs and marketing events coming up, the break will be brief.

“Just because society doesn’t expect much from Indigenous people doesn’t mean we don’t expect from ourselves,” he said.

ADVERTISEMENT

LUXURY LIST

www.LuxuryList.com.au

**BLACK DIAMONDZ 黑钻**  
PARFUMS & COSMETICS

**PYMBLE, NSW, AUSTRALIA**  
**POA**  
**IDYLIC NATURAL SURROUNDS**

Sunforge, one of Sydney’s most significant pieces of architecture. Set on approx. 2,746sqm, this striking residence with beautifully landscaped gardens offers resort luxury and north-facing splendour within walking distance of elite schools, shops and Pymble train station. No expense was spared crafting this entertainers’ home, which boasts a multi award-winning home cinema. The ground floor features 3.9-meter ceilings with North facing glass walls in every room. With design input from a Feng shui master, the study or “money area”, with its right-angled corridor entrance, ensures that energy cannot escape. Delivering space, style and resort luxury for those who love to live and entertain in magical seclusion.

**CONTACT** Monika Tu +61 409 898 888  
**MORE INFO** www.luxurylist.com.au/2549769



BUSINESS



Free stuff. But it comes at a price.

Amazon’s Vine reviewers find their lives become shaped by the program

BY JOHN HERRMAN

A U.P.S. driver once said the house set his delivery record: 32 packages in one day. There have been bigger days since, and the burden is now spread across three carriers. Most of it falls to the local postal carriers. They used to make the rounds in a sedan until the sheer volume of packages delivered up the hill each week required them to upgrade to a truck. The boxes have slowed lately, but something arrives almost every day.

The boxes crowd the porch — this is up in a tranquil stretch of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the eastern United States — before gradually making their way inside, past the patio table, which came from a box, and its four chairs, from boxes all. The living room was largely furnished from the boxes: a couch, an end table, rugs, the love seat. In the bedroom, the boxes account for artwork, linens, a clothes rack, the mattress and several pillows, of course. The extra window unit air-conditioners: white boxes from brown boxes. The kitchen is stocked from the flow of boxes — the knife block, the espresso machine, the convection oven — as are the home’s closets.

The office is almost all box — furniture, printers (regular and 3-D), computer, at least 13 hard drives and four routers. The art on the walls came this way; the new shelves installed to store the items from the porch boxes came through porch boxes. The camera system through which the porch boxes are surveilled was itself unpacked from a porch box. The worry is thieves, though the camera mostly catches wildlife: rabbits, turkeys and mice, with an elk every once in a while, and, so far, one coyote and a bear.

K. T., 54, shares this home, and these boxes, with her husband and two dogs. She’s a volunteer animal rescue transport driver and a former proofreader, but now much of her time and attention are devoted to box intake and processing. She does most of her shopping online, she said; the nearest town has only about a thousand residents, and it’s usually more convenient to order. That, and the fact that a vast majority of these boxes arrive free of charge courtesy of Amazon itself.

K. T. is an Amazon “Vine Voice.” Amazon sends her free stuff; she, as an established and trusted reviewer, tests it and writes reviews. There are thousands of Vine Voices, but K. T. is almost certainly among the most prolific. Over the years, she has passed in and out of Amazon’s overall Top 100 reviewer rankings. The Times agreed not to identify her: For Vine reviewers, identifying information — names, email addresses, websites — can be construed as a solicitation for free products from non-Vine sources, which Amazon can decide is grounds for removal from the program.

And K. T. takes her responsibilities seriously, dedicating time to each new item that emerges from the boxes and writing reviews that are succinct but complete. She helps run an online community for other Vine Voices — there’s another Viner in her town; she traveled out of state to meet the co-moderator of her community, whom she considers a close friend — and has reshaped her life around the program. “It’s only been about three years,” she said, “so I’m sort of new.”

THE SECRETS OF STUFF

If you invested \$5,000 in Amazon in August 2007, when Vine was announced, your stock would now be worth more than \$100,000. If, instead, you had started reviewing your Amazon purchases, built a reputation as a reliable reviewer, secured an invite to the Vine program, kept your head down, filed your assignments and avoided the occasional purges of reviewers, your take-home total might today exceed that number, although in somewhat less liquid forms: five vacuums here; 14 hard drives there; some laptops and cell-phones; Bluetooth speakers, and headphones, and headsets, and, well, pretty much anything with Bluetooth, so much Bluetooth, mouthful after mouthful of blue teeth.

“Being part of the Vine program at the very beginning gave me a sense of duty,” said Diana de Avila, who had already been writing Amazon reviews since the mid-1990s. “I thought, oh my gosh, this large, emerging company is just growing by leaps and bounds, and they wanted me to be part of this apparatus,” she said.

In 2007 it was, as apparatuses go, primitive. On the third Thursday of each month, Ms. de Avila would take a seat at her computer a little before 3 p.m. and start refreshing, knowing that around the United States, other Viners were doing the same. A list would be posted to an internal portal and go out in an email. There might be a dozen items, in limited quantities. The lists were heavy on books at first. Many of them would be gone in seconds, she remembered, and there were often technical difficulties. “That was the excitement of it,” she said.

“I was pretty quick at the draw, so I got some pretty good stuff,” Ms. de Avila said. “I got multiple cameras, video cameras, probably more than a dozen.”

Users could then go to a special Vine-only forum on Amazon’s site and discuss what they’d gotten. It was a fairly small world — there weren’t very many products or very many reviewers, and there were limits on how many users could claim. The forum thrived and suffered in ways that were characteristic of online communities of the time: There were habitual posters, show-offs, trolls and critics, and of course a steady supply of know-nothing newbies, newly invited by Amazon. The company itself was nearly silent.

The program swelled in both membership and inventory. A monthly email from 2011, for example, contained more than 400 items, including a baby food maker, a line of Taco Bell sauces, a package of sticky notes, a dispenser for sticky notes, a few wall mounts for TVs, and books, lots of books. The letters “USB” appear 42 times.

In 2016, the service received a substantial overhaul. The emails and posts were replaced with a pair of feeds: One was targeted to each individual Vine user, based on preferences and shopping habits. The other was visible to everyone. You could now review as many products as you wanted.

And in 2015, Amazon began asking Vine reviewers for their tax information, which meant that, over a certain value, Vine products were no longer free, really. Review products count as income; their tax value, as calculated by Amazon, can be a major factor in which products Vine reviewers choose to have delivered. The most prolific reviewers have tax burdens in the tens of thousands of dollars. (This rarely happens, if ever. The boldest Viners sell products right away, while some become extremely generous with charity. A super-Viner almost doesn’t have a choice, for space reasons alone.)

“We ask Vine Voices not to resell products for six months,” Angie Newman, an Amazon spokeswoman, said in an email. “After that, the product is theirs and they can use it or dispose of it as they see fit.”

Many donate enough to alleviate their tax burdens, but no more, so as not to attract the wrong kind of attention to their arrangements, unique as they are, and lacking anything in the way of guidance from Amazon itself.

INSIDE THE MYSTERY BOX

While most of us experience Amazon’s surveillance with a mixture of annoyance and bemusement — you are never allowed to forget what items you’ve looked at on Amazon, at least not until you buy them — Vine reviewers exploit it.

“You can try to signal to it,” K. T. said. “I searched for drones, hoping they would show up in my targeting.” Some Viners described getting clothing in more-or-less “random” sizes.

In 2017, Amazon removed the Vine discussion forums from its site. To the extent there is a coherent Vine community still, it is spread across multiple private groups on Goodreads, the book review site owned by Amazon, and smaller communities further afield, on Reddit and Craigslist. There are groups and splinter groups, cross-forum enemies, reputations and rivalries.

Mostly they’re a place where people who are part of this odd program that they’re not supposed to talk about can



figure out what’s going on in a system that changes constantly without notice, in the shadow of the company that is both an intense part of their lives and outwardly indifferent to their existence.

In a Craigslist forum, for example, users spent recent weeks commiserating about their shrinking review queues. (They were restored shortly after, but posters weren’t happy with how: “Mine has been restocked as well, but with things I don’t need,” said one. “That’s it — junk.” Another user warned others off a particular brand of chocolates he’d gotten for his wife: “They weren’t even edible and had a strange odor.”

FOR THE BRANDS

“From a sky-high view, the reason Amazon is so successful is that it’s easy for people to find things on Amazon,” said Rachel Johnson Greer, a former Amazon employee of eight years, and currently the managing partner of Cascadia Seller Solutions, a firm that helps sellers on Amazon’s Marketplace. If you search for something, it tends to show up. If you’re looking for something, Amazon gives you recommendations.

But the pool of products Amazon now draws from is, in most categories, large and not readily countable. And so, as with Google search results, getting your product on the first page of results for a specific term — or giving it a chance of floating upward in one of the site’s countless recommendation or discovery mechanisms — is crucial. In its earliest days, Amazon operated in plainer view: Products were categorized, then found by customers, then reviewed by customers. The good stuff ranked higher, the junk drifted out of view. Now,

when customers don’t just have countless alternatives to a particular product but multiple ways on the site to buy the same product, even a potentially beloved product needs a leg up.

“It’s a little bit of a Catch-22,” Ms. Greer said. “To show up in search, you have to have been clicked. To have been clicked, you have to show up in search.” Your listings are more visible if people have clicked on and bought your products.

Handily, Amazon is also an advertising platform — you can pay for people to see your product when they search for or look at certain things. But the economics are punishing. “If there are no reviews, people won’t click,” Ms. Greer said. “If you have a product that dips below 3.5 or 4 stars, your advertising cost doubles or triples.” To get the same clicks, you have to do a lot more advertising. People aren’t as willing to convert when there are lower reviews, and they’re not as likely to click in the first place. To get the clicks, you need to bid higher.”

In that case, you would turn to other methods. You can advertise on Google. (Expensive.) You can hire influencers. (Works for some, useless for others; risky.) Or you can consider Vine.

Vendors, who have a fairly conventional buyer-supplier relationship with Amazon, can pay Amazon to participate in the program, at a cost of often more than a thousand dollars per product, just to get reviews. Participation in Vine is usually negotiated as part of vendor contracts with Amazon, according to the company.

“If you start off with 30 four-star reviews, you have a leg up on everybody,”

Ms. Greer said.

Amazon has been testing Vine for Marketplace members — semi-independent sellers who account for a majority of Amazon’s total sales — who, in 2016, were prohibited from soliciting “incentivized reviews” on their own. The initial price quoted to sellers was \$1,000 per unique catalog item.

In Ms. Greer’s view, this strategy is effective and, for the right products, economical. Amazon is a largely click-driven ecosystem, and reviews are a great way to get clicks. The main risk, she says, is that some Vine reviewers can be picky. They get a lot of stuff; yours probably isn’t the first pair of wireless earbuds they’ve used, or even reviewed. A four-star review average gets you through the door. Below three stars might close it completely. The earbuds had better work.

THE WAY OUT

Vine has a few plausible futures. Maybe it gets sidelined and replaced with something else — it’s been 10 years, anyway, and Amazon is always trying new things. (For example, it recently began rolling out a program to send free samples to users on behalf of major brands.) But the volume of products coming through Vine is still high, and the company clearly understands its utility beyond the fees it charges vendors.

Amazon’s extensive and growing collection of private labels and exclusive brands also subscribes to the program, its listings topped up with conspicuously labeled Vine Voice reviews. Vine Voices make visible contributions to the ongoing construction of Amazon’s retail reality, review by review, star by star.

In 10 years, Vine has already changed a lot, changing with it the lives of its reviewers. The life of a super-Viner is one for which not everyone is well adapted. Last year, on Reddit, a Vine reviewer who had been in the program since 2007 shared that she had been kicked out. “I’m getting ready to downsize,” she said, “and was so relieved to log in tonight and see that I am no longer a part of Amazon Vine.”

She wrote: “Pretty much my whole house is furnished with Amazon Vine. I eat Amazon Vine daily, and groom with Amazon Vine daily. I was no longer selective. I got divorced some years ago and it was nice to not want to take any material things with me because I knew goodies would be coming my way, and I was blessed with so much.”

It’s a startling sentiment, to be relieved to no longer have access to, effectively, unlimited free stuff. But other Viners were generally sympathetic. In a private message, she explained to me how she had drifted into a state of “over-consumption.” Things were exciting for a few years, she said, mentioning the same thrill in nabbing a good item, or a “shiny,” enjoying the rhythmic patterns of old Vine.

But then the feed came along. “I found myself checking the queue a dozen times a day,” she said. “I didn’t want to miss the next great thing.”

People tend to consider purchases. But when things are given to you, and it’s your job to review them, the value of the object gets scrambled in surprising ways, and its influence on your life becomes easy to minimize, or disregard. The free rug needs artwork to match. You wanted a road bike, but the beach cruiser was free, and now you have a bike, but you don’t really ride it. You get a Keurig, and you hate it, but Vine keeps sending K-cups, and so you keep drinking them. “Eventually, I think Vine caught on that I wanted a Nespresso from my search history,” she wrote, “and I was finally offered a Nespresso.”

“I have 11 Vine watches, yet I only wear two on a regular basis,” she said. “Before Vine, I did not even own a watch, as I considered them old-fashioned when you can check the time on your cellphone.”

Asked if she felt Vine had altered her relationship with material goods, K.T., the Vine reviewer in the Blue Ridge Mountains, suggested they consider how it might allow them to give back. “I pray for thanks and the blessing of Vine every day,” she said. She’s grateful, she says, not just to have access to this conduit of things that she might need or wants, or for the ways it allows her to be generous to others, but for the task itself.

“I’m just a regular person, I’ve got no claim to fame,” she said. “NASA isn’t calling on me,” she said. But Amazon is. Sort of.

Like many Viners, K.T. has been girding for bad news for years, just in case.

“You’re getting so much good from this, and you’re not doing anything special,” she said. Her boxes — and what has effectively become her job — could cease tomorrow. “To Amazon, you’re abstract. For me, it’s an actual, physical, material manifestation. It’s here, it’s present in my life,” she said. “I’m just hoping that if I give quality reviews,” she said, trailing off.

Ms. de Avila’s choice to leave Vine was a rare one. She echoed the sentiment shared on Reddit, that consumption divorced from what typically dictates it — not just price, but need and desire — can have surprising effects.

In 2014, she moved to a smaller home in a new place. She started getting rid of stuff. She was getting behind on her reviews, and started to feel guilty. She was losing her Sundays to Vine, just to catch up, and the boxes just kept coming. “It was becoming more and more difficult to become excited about receiving gifts from people,” she said. “It was kind of like someone who wins the lottery.”

It was too much stuff, and too much expectation. But “it gave me a way to build meaning, she said, “leaving a corporate job with a lot of responsibility.” Receiving boxes from Amazon, and completing the corresponding Vine tasks, gave her a temporary new identity.

“I loved it,” she said. “I just knew it was time to step away.” When she did, she said, she was at peace. She doesn’t miss it.



# Opinion

## The U.S. needs to stay out of Venezuela

Yes, the country's people deserve a better government. But Elliott Abrams and John Bolton shouldn't have a say in what it looks like.

Patrick Iber

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, speaking to the United Nations Security Council on Jan. 26, called on “every other nation to pick a side” and to “stand with the forces of freedom” in the standoff between President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela and Juan Guaidó, the head of the country's National Assembly, who declared his interim presidency on Jan. 23 and quickly won the support of the United States and many other countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Since Mr. Pompeo's speech, the United States has put further pressure on the Maduro government, imposing new oil sanctions and reiterating that “all options” — including, presumably, military intervention — “are on the table.” John Bolton, President Trump's national security adviser, was photographed this week holding a notepad with “5,000 troops to Colombia” written on it.

The situation in Venezuela is desperate. Protests continue, both Mr. Maduro and Mr. Guaidó claim their presidential legitimacy, and a deterioration could pile more political violence onto a country that is already suffering from a demolished economy. Something must change.

Regardless of how one feels about Mr. Maduro, it's clear that Washington is not a trustworthy partner in pushing for regime change.

But the United States has no constructive role to play in Venezuela's political crisis. Regardless of how one feels about Mr. Maduro, it's clear that Washington is not a trustworthy partner in pushing for regime change. The Trump administration's actions — and its personnel — recall the long and sordid

history of United States intervention in Latin America.

Throughout the 20th century, the United States frequently intervened in the internal affairs of Latin American countries, which it considers part of its geopolitical backyard. “I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men,” Woodrow Wilson said in 1913. Other presidents paternalistically assumed that they knew how to improve political situations in the region. The result was rarely democracy and stability.

During the Cold War, a pattern emerged. Washington mobilized covert resources to support opposition to left-wing governments. In 1954, the C.I.A. trained a small invasion force to remove President Jacobo Árbenz of Guatemala, who had redistributed land belonging to the United Fruit Company. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson was prepared to provide support to the Brazilian military during its coup against President João Goulart, though the coup succeeded without it. In the early 1970s, Richard Nixon's administration helped undermine the



MERIDITH KOHUT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

government of the socialist Salvador Allende in Chile before he, too, was deposed in a military coup.

In such cases, regime change was celebrated by the United States as the restoration of democracy. But Guatemala saw the reversal of the agrarian and other reforms, followed by decades of civil conflict. Brazil had 21 years of military dictatorship, and Chile, 17. Torture and repression were essential tools of those governments.

And worryingly, the Cold Warriors are back. Leading Washington's policy on Venezuela right now is Mr. Bolton, who served in Ronald Reagan's administration. The White House has named as a special envoy for Venezuela Elliott Abrams, who, while working in the Reagan administration, excused human rights abuses committed by United States-trained forces in Central America. “I've been a counterrevolutionary for a long time,” Mr. Abrams said in 1986.

But if Mr. Maduro is eager to wear the mantle of the aggrieved leftist menaced by American imperialism, it

fits him poorly. Millions of Venezuelans have left the country in recent years, creating a regional refugee crisis. People are suffering from hunger and a lack of access to medicine and basic goods. The economy has shrunk by half in five years, and inflation in 2018 reached 1,000,000 percent. Opposition to the Maduro government extends to all classes of Venezuelans.

In a reversal of the region's most typical Cold War pattern, it is Mr. Maduro's supposedly socialist government that relies on paramilitary violence to maintain power. China and Russia, which still support the Maduro government, are no less interested in profiting from Venezuela's oil than the United States.

It is as yet unclear how directly the United States shaped Mr. Guaidó's decision to challenge Mr. Maduro's authority. In December, he met secretly with officials in the United States, Colombia and Brazil, all governed by right-wing governments. But what is clear is that support for Mr. Guaidó — or at least for an alternative

to Mr. Maduro — extends beyond the right. Mr. Guaidó was recognized as interim president by most members of the Lima Group — including Peru, Canada, Ecuador and Argentina — a body formed in 2017 to seek a peaceful resolution to the Venezuelan crisis.

Even if Mr. Guaidó did coordinate his declaration with the United States, the popular discontent that he channels is real. Many Venezuelans are eager to find help wherever they can, even if that means a Trump administration that is hardly known for its hostility to dictatorship or its commitment to human rights.

This is a vulnerability for the opposition. Washington is all too ready to lend a hand, but in doing so it could — as it has so many times in Latin America's history — cause more harm than good.

Mr. Maduro will use United States intervention to rally his remaining domestic and internal support under an anti-imperialist banner, drawing parallels with Washington's long history in the region. United States inter-

vention would also undermine the prospect for the thing that Venezuela needs most to achieve a peaceful transition to democracy: national reconciliation. A government that owes a debt to Mr. Bolton and Mr. Abrams will not only be viewed with suspicion by many on the left in Venezuela; it could be forced to abide by constraints imposed by the neoconservatives in Washington about which political actors are considered acceptable partners in a reconciliation process.

The situation in Venezuela is, undoubtedly, difficult. But when it comes to Latin America, Washington has a long history of making difficult situations worse. It is precisely because Venezuela deserves a better government than it currently has that the United States should not play a role in choosing it.

**PATRICK IBER** is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is the author of “Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America.”

A sign says “Venezuela deserves change” at a rally in Caracas last month in support of amnesty for political prisoners.

## Athens in pieces: The art of memory

The ancient city is also a living one. And it still has plenty to tell us, if we care to listen.

Simon Critchley

**ATHENS** There is an ancient tradition relating to the art of memory, which legend says began with the poet Simonides of Ceos (556-468 B.C.E.). Simonides was giving a recitation in the dining hall of the house of Scopas, a Thessalian nobleman, when he was called outside because two strangers wanted to speak to him.

When the poet exited, the strangers were nowhere to be found, and the dining hall suddenly and violently collapsed. Scopas and his guests were crushed to death and disfigured beyond recognition. But Simonides was able to identify each of the corpses by remembering the precise place where they were sitting or lounging before the calamity.

With this association of memory with place, or “topos,” the idea of mnemotechnics, or the art of memory, came into being. In order to recall something, one has to identify a locus either in the interior palace of one's memory or by constructing an exterior, physical memory theater. Various attempts to build such memory theaters punctuate antiquity. It is a practice picked up again in the Italian Renaissance and continued into the architecture of Elizabethan theater — like Shakespeare's Globe — and beyond.

The story of Simonides is somewhat grisly, but I would like to borrow the association of recollection and location it in order to build a tiny — and admittedly idiosyncratic — memory theater of Athens: a personal cabinet of memory spaces and places: treasures,



MARIA MAVROPOULOU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

oddities and curiosities. Every city, every “polis,” is a necropolis, a city of the dead; but it just so happens that Athens is a particularly ancient graveyard with multiple, interconnected and entangled layers of life that has passed away. It is also a unique place because of the way in which its ghosts continue to haunt our present, often in unexpected and unimagined ways. And

obviously, for those of us who have spent their time trying to teach philosophy, Athens is a magical city, for this is where what we still recognize as philosophia really began.

How do we make those ancient Athenian ghosts speak to us? How is it possible to revive what is dead? In a lecture given in Oxford in 1908, the famous German philologist Ulrich von

Wilamowitz-Moellendorf said, “We know that ghosts cannot speak until they have drunk blood; and the spirits which we evoke demand the blood of our hearts. We give it to them gladly.” In order to revive the ancients, we have to give them a little of our lifeblood (although I hope reading these essays won't be too bloody painful).

The consequence of Wilamowitz's thought is that the blood that flows in the veins of these ancient ghosts is our own and that, therefore, when the ancients speak to us, they do not just tell us about themselves, but also about us. We always see antiquity in the image of ourselves and our age. But that image is not some Narcissus-like reflection; it is more of an oblique refraction that allows us to see ourselves in a novel way, and in a slightly alien manner. By looking into the deep past, we see ourselves, but perhaps not as we have seen ourselves before, turned inside out and upside down.

This touches on the reason I decided to attempt this project and write these pieces. The world, especially that corner of it that we still call the West, has become a deafening place dominated by an ever-enlarging incoherence of information and the constant presence of verbal and physical violence. Our countries are split, our houses are divided, and the fragile web of family and friendship withers under the black sun of big tech. Everything that passed as learning seems to have reached a boiling point. We simmer, we feel the heat, and we wonder what can be done.

Now, something that I have noticed here and there, talking to sundry folk over the past couple of years, is a renewed interest in antiquity: Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Chinese, Mayan, or whatever. This is partly because the ancient past offers some kind of solace and escape from the seeming urgency of the present — and such consolation cannot be disregarded. Antiquity can be the source of immense pleasure, a word that feels almost scandalous to employ. For a time, we can be trans-

CRITCHLEY, PAGE 13



OPINION

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

A.G. SULZBERGER, Publisher

DEAN BAQUET, Executive Editor  
JOSEPH KAHN, Managing Editor  
SUZANNE DALEY, Associate Editor

JAMES BENNET, Editorial Page Editor  
JAMES DAO, Deputy Editorial Page Editor  
KATHLEEN KINGSBURY, Deputy Editorial Page Editor

MARK THOMPSON, Chief Executive Officer  
STEPHEN DUNBAR-JOHNSON, President, International  
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE DEMARTA, Senior V.P., Global Advertising  
CHARLOTTE GORDON, V.P., International Consumer Marketing  
HELEN KONSTANTOPOULOS, V.P., International Circulation  
HELENA PHUA, Executive V.P., Asia-Pacific  
SUZANNE YVERNES, International Chief Financial Officer

BRAZIL’S ENVIRONMENTAL NEGLIGENCE

The mining industry puts lives at risk with shoddy maintenance of dams built to contain mining waste.

After the catastrophic rupture of a mine-tailings dam in Brazil last month, leaving behind at least 110 dead, 238 missing and an environmental disaster of epic proportions, the police were quick to arrest five people who had been responsible for inspecting the dam and who most recently proclaimed it “stable.” Certainly they had erred, and courts will decide whether they did so criminally. But rounding up the usual suspects does not begin to address responsibility for a disaster of this scale and a danger many mining communities face around the world.

Tailings are the wet waste from mining operations, often laced with toxic chemicals. At thousands of mines around the world, millions of tons of the muck accumulate behind dams. The most common type of dam — and the cheapest to build — is known as “upstream,” made by piling up thick sludge and raising the height of the dam as the pond grows. At the mine where the accident occurred in southeastern Brazil, owned by the giant mining company Vale, the dam was 28 stories high.

The dam’s collapse unleashed a torrent of contaminated mud and sludge that buried vehicles, homes and a cafeteria serving mine workers. The state government warned that the muck posed a risk to humans and animals and ordered the company to set aside more than \$200 million to compensate victims. Officials warned residents not to use water from the Paraopeba River for any purpose.

The danger posed by tailings dams is well known. Three years ago another upstream dam in the same Brazilian state, Minas Gerais, and co-owned by Vale and Australia’s BHP Group, collapsed, killing 19 people. The muck from that mine flowed 400 miles to the Atlantic Ocean. Other dams have collapsed in many countries around the world, and while the overall number of failures each year has been declining, the occurrence of major collapses has increased. According to the database World Mine Tailings Failures, there were 46 “serious” or “very serious” collapses — such as those in Brazil — between 1998 and 2017.

One reason is increased rainfall because of climate change, which can erode a dam wall years after the tailings pool is no longer in use. One study found that heavy rain was cited as a contributor to a quarter of global dam failures. Given that there are thousands of tailings dams around the world, and that mining companies generate ever more waste — they produced 8.5 billion metric tons in 2017, more than double the amount in 2000, according to an Australian researcher — the dams pose a danger that arresting a few workers won’t address.

The cost of failures is high, as Vale is learning. Shares in the company plunged 24 percent on the Monday after the Friday accident, and Vale is likely to face billions of dollars in penalties. That cost alone should propel Vale and the rest of the mining industry to take an immediate look at the way that they dispose of mining sludge and to inspect their dams. A joint report in November 2017 by the United Nations Environment Program and the Norwegian foundation GRID-Arendal found that in most failures, there had been ample advance warning signs. “The tragedy is that the warning signs were either ignored or not recognized by under-resourced management,” the report said.

After the 2015 accident in the state of Minas Gerais, state and federal investigators urged hiring more dam inspectors. But the federal government slashed budgets, in effect leaving Vale and other companies to do their own monitoring. It’s far from certain that the government will do better this time: Brazil’s new right-wing president, Jair Bolsonaro, has already hobbled environmental regulators, and his infrastructure minister has warned against the “demonization” of Vale.

Vale, by contrast, has been quick to pledge changes. Fabio Schvartsman, its chief executive, said Tuesday that the company had decided to stop operations at mines where another 10 upstream dams were still in use until all were fully decommissioned, a process likely to take one to three years. The dam that burst last week had been out of use for two and a half years, he said, and was in the process of being decommissioned.

The global mining industry should take heed. It is clear that the industry needs to take a close look at upstream dams, to establish strict international standards for the way they are built and inspected and to study alternative ways to dispose of their wastes.

The alarming allure of the brumbies

A. Odysseus Patrick

**SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA** Since this country’s founding in the early 20th century, the packs of untamed horses that roam freely through our beautiful and hostile alpine landscape have captured the public’s imagination. The savage grace and freedom of the horses — known here as brumbies — have made them into a popular symbol of the national spirit.

Today, environmentalists want the brumbies shot.

Not since cattle roamed the mountain parks (before a ban in the 1950s) have animals done such damage to the alpine regions that Australians proudly call the “high country.”

A 2014 survey estimated there were more than 9,500 wild horses in the Australian Alps. Some of the horses descend from animals that belonged to settlers in the early 1800s.

The brumbies eat fragile alpine moss. Their hooves trample the banks of creeks, killing vegetation that stops silt from building up. They destroy peat that takes thousands of years to develop. Campers report the fear of being trampled by herds in the middle of the night.

Populations of rare alpine water skinks and broad-toothed rats are declining as the brumbies degrade

their habitats. Three endangered species — the corroboree frog, the mountain pygmy possum and the stocky galaxias, a fish found in only one river system — are at risk unless the number of horses is reduced quickly, scientists say.

The environment is being sacrificed for a national myth. The cultural bias for brumbies has helped the tourism industry — reinforced by anti-scientific sentiment among rural communities —

**Australia’s environment is being sacrificed for a national myth.**

to successfully lobby government officials to end an annual culling of the horses.

The animals are now a protected species. And the government of New South Wales State enacted a law last

year ending a program that had aimed to gradually reduce the brumby numbers over the long term in the Alps’ largest reserve, the Kosciuszko National Park.

Misguided military lore increased the horses’ mystique.

During World War I, Australian mounted units called the Light Horse Brigades served with distinction in Gallipoli and Beersheba in the Sinai Desert, where they carried out a famous charge at entrenched Turkish soldiers over open ground.

Some of the Light Horse soldiers came from the high country. Many

Australians believe that brumbies made an important contribution to the horse regiments. Among them is the deputy premier of New South Wales, John Barilaro, the politician responsible for shielding them today.

“Nothing is more synonymous with the Australian outdoor lifestyle than the brumby,” Mr. Barilaro told the legislature when he introduced a pro-brumby law.

The war story doesn’t stand up. The Australian Army preferred Walers, a sturdy breed that could travel long distances in hot climates with little water, and a study for the New South Wales National Parks Service found no evidence that brumbies were ever used by the army.

In alpine national parks, even a small number of horses can cause severe damage because the sensitive environment recovers very slowly.

The legend of the bush battler resisting state authority has become a central and often-irresistible rationale for the protection of rural interests at the expense of scientific and political progress. Australians’ attachment to rural legends is exploited by local politicians to deliver their communities’ wish lists — from counterproductive subsidies for farmers who haven’t prepared for drought to the construction of an inland railway line of dubious value.

Opposition to culling is also driven by a hostility among local communities

toward environmentalists and government conservationists. A leading proponent of the new state law is a former conservative politician who now makes a living organizing horse rides in the park.

The horse advocates’ success has emboldened activists across the border in Victoria State, where in December a judge was asked to stop the government from removing wild horses from the Bogong High Plains section of the Alpine National Park. A decision is expected this year.

To apply political pressure, dozens of scientists published an open letter in November arguing that the decision gave priority to a single invasive species over many native species and ecosystems, some of which are found nowhere else on Earth. These scientists advocate shooting horses from helicopters right away (large parts of the park are inaccessible by vehicle). Mr. Barilaro, the politician, says Australians’ “social conscience” won’t accept shooting, and they should be moved to less-vulnerable areas of the reserve.

Safeguarding a nation’s cultural heritage is as important as protecting its environmental heritage. But a fantasy, however appealing, should not be allowed to outweigh good science.

**A. ODYSSEUS PATRICK** is the senior correspondent at the *Australian Financial Review*.



FAIRFAX MEDIA, VIA GETTY IMAGES

Wild brumbies running through Australia’s high country. A 2014 survey estimated there were more than 9,500 wild horses in the Australian Alps.

Kamala Harris, call-out star



David Brooks

The more you learn about Kamala Harris, the more formidable she appears. She is an amazing amalgam of different elements — highly educated elite meritocrat, Oakland street fighter, crusading, rough-elbow prosecutor, canny machine pol and telegenic rhetorical brawler.

She is also probably the toughest and most hard-nosed progressive on the scene right now.

Some on the left are criticizing Harris because she was an aggressive prosecutor for years, participating in the era of mass incarceration. But as the Democratic Party has moved left ideologically, and grown more suspicious of cops and prosecutors, it has also hardened emotionally.

Democratic primary voters may decide that if they are going to take on Donald Trump, they’re going to want the roughest, most confrontational gladiator they can get. After they see how, well, direct she can be, they may decide that person is Kamala Harris.

Harris is very much a product of the highly educated progressive coastal elite. Her father is a professor at Stan-

ford. Her mother, who was a breast cancer researcher, got her Ph.D. at 25. Harris grew up with ballet, violin, French horn and perfectionism.

She went to a prestigious school (Howard), was president of various student organizations and got great internships (Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Senate) before going to law school, zooming up the political ladder and marrying a partner at a prestigious law firm. She is famously comfortable in rooms of the very wealthy.

But in deciding to work as a prosecutor — rather than going to a law firm — Harris was immersing herself in the gritty world the rest of the achievements were rising away from. Working as a prosecutor put her in touch with a world in which brothers sexually abuse their 6-year-old sisters, in which a man literally scalps his girlfriend in a domestic dispute, in which parents are too financially stressed and personally strained to have the time to make sure their kids go to school.

The criminal justice system is an adversarial system, and it seems to have trained her in the art of confrontation. She developed what Benjamin Wallace-Wells of The New Yorker called an “eye for an enemy” — the ability to spot the villain in any situation.

In her memoir, “The Truths We Hold,” she describes her political campaigns as a series of hard-fought battles against tough foes. She ran for San Francisco district attorney against her former boss, whose nickname was Kayo (pronounced “K.O.”), for all the

people he knocked out. But she beat him.

Gary Delagnes, a former head of the city’s police union, told Politico that he was standing at a party before that campaign when Harris put a finger in his chest and said: “You better endorse me, you better endorse me. You get it?”

Delagnes interpreted that as: I’m going to be a player here. You better get on board. He went on to tell Politico: “She’s an intelligent person. She is a — let’s see, I better pick this word carefully: ruthless.”

Harris was a beneficiary of the machine of the California political giant

**The toughest progressive America has seen in a long time.** Willie Brown, who she briefly dated. Brown appointed her to the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board and the California Medical Assistance Commission, both of

which paid comfortable salaries. That association has haunted her over the years, but Harris made it clear at one forum that there is no way she’s going to bend if Brown or his allies try to influence her. “You just make them understand that if they’re going to try to hurt you, they’re going to get hurt more.”

Especially as it goes along, her book is largely a series of scenes in which she has angry confrontations with powerful people.

“Get me Jamie Dimon on the phone,” she barked to her staff before having a

raised-voice conversation with the C.E.O. of J.P. Morgan Chase. Her brief Senate career has been defined by a series of confrontations with Trump administration officials at various committee hearings.

She reprints long transcripts of the episodes in her book. What you see is that she seems to have no inhibitions about hitting her opponent with full rhetorical force and landing the full blow.

We in the punditocracy are generally analyzing the Democratic presidential race on ideological grounds: Which minute differences exist in the candidates’ various “Medicare for all” plans. I doubt that is how Democratic voters are thinking. Their immediate problem is Donald Trump, and the culture of shamelessness he has instigated.

To beat Trump, I suspect Democrats will want unity. They won’t want somebody who essentially runs against the Democratic establishment (Bernie Sanders); they’ll want somebody who embodies it (Harris). They’ll want somebody who seems able to pulverize Trump in a debate (Harris).

It will be interesting to see how primary voters wrestle with these questions: Is America too racist and sexist right now to elect a black woman? Or would nominating a black woman in fact be the perfect rebuttal to Trump?

But the larger issue may be temperament and toughness. Harris’s fearless, cut-the-crap rhetorical style will probably serve her well in this pugilistic political moment.





## Athens in pieces: The art of memory

**CRITCHLEY, FROM PAGE 11**

ported elsewhere, where life was formed by different forces and shaped with patterns slightly alien to our own.

But also — and most importantly — the ancient past can give us a way of pushing back against what Wallace Stevens called “the pressure of reality,” of enlivening the leadenness of the present with the transforming force of the historical imagination. As such, antiquity can provide us with breathing space, perhaps even an oxygen tank, where we can fill our lungs before plunging back into the blips, tweets, clicks, and endless breaking news updates that populate our days, and where we are “distracted from distraction by distraction,” as T.S. Eliot said. By looking into the past, we can see further and more clearly into the present.

Having emphasized the connection between memory and location, let me tell you something about the place where I will be writing these essays, as it is rather grand.

I have a desk and a lamp (and access to strong Greek coffee) in the Onassis Foundation Library, close to Hadrian’s Arch. Out of the window, across the near constant hum of thick traffic on Syngrou Avenue, I can see

the vast columns of the Temple of Olympian Zeus. Their tall Corinthian capitals shine in the cool winter sun. It is a mere slingshot distance from the Acropolis and a truly privileged spot in which to work. I am sitting across from the first printed edition of Homer’s *Opera*, which was published by Greek printers in Florence in 1488-89, and the “Etymologicum Magnum,” which was the first printed lexical encyclopedia in Greek, produced by Cretan printers in Venice in 1499. There are many other dizzyingly beautiful treasures in this library, which was based on the personal collection of Konstantinos Sp. Staikos.

I met with Mr. Staikos in the library last week. He is also an architect, and he designed the library in which we sat. He is a person of great erudition and carefully chosen words, and I could not help but be impressed. We talked for a long while about the history of libraries in the Hellenic world and their connection to the various philosophical schools of Athens and elsewhere. My mind began to whirl and spin with possibility. For a library is also a memory theater. Being inside this library is a little like being inside the head of Mr. Staikos, and I have spent the last week reading his many

volumes on the history of libraries, where he offers detailed architectural reconstructions of their design, their function and even their holdings.

One of Mr. Staikos’s lifelong passions is the attempt to reconstruct the library and the entire architecture of Plato’s Academy from the fourth century B.C.E. This will be the topic of next week’s essay.

As for the other objects to be discussed, I would like them to be a bit of a surprise. This is mostly because I am intent on letting Athens surprise me. I am not at all sure what the coming weeks will hold in their storehouse of memory.

*Next: A visit to Plato’s Academy.*

**SIMON CRITCHLEY** is the Hans Jonas Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research and the author of several books, including “What We Think About When We Think About Soccer,” and the forthcoming “Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us.”

**ATHENS IN PIECES** is the first in a series of dispatches by the author, tracing the past of Athens. Each post will focus on a specific object or site from Greek antiquity for insight into contemporary life and politics.

## India can’t hide its unemployment crisis

**BASU, FROM PAGE 1**

regular salary — comes from industrialized nations. Yet according to various reports, more than 80 percent of Indians who are working or seeking work are in the informal sector; many of them doing odd jobs for multiple employers. Their activity is far more complicated for economists to measure accurately.

Making matters worse — and fueling speculation that the unemployment situation in India is even more dire than suspected — the government has withheld official data about jobs. The two members of the NSSO who were not government officials resigned this week, in protest over the decision to not release their office’s results even though those had been cleared for publication.

The other official source economists have traditionally turned to are the employment statistics of the Labour Bureau. The office had been releasing this data regularly for nearly a decade — until 2016, when the Labour Ministry suddenly decided to discontinue the series.

This information blackout is uncharacteristic for India, which has been praised, including by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Angus Deaton, for playing a pioneering role, globally, in statistical data collection.

Now, analysts have to rely on other

sources, indirect evidence and private studies.

The findings from those are alarming.

The Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy, a well-respected business information company that collects primary data on various aspects of the Indian economy, estimates that the country’s unemployment rate in December 2018 reached 7.38 percent.

According to the “State of Working India 2018,” a large study conducted by the Center for Sustainable Employment at Azim Premji University, India’s youth unemployment now stands at 16 percent. Women hold just 16 percent of jobs in the service sector. In 2011, only 13 percent of senior officers, legislators and managers were women; by 2015, the figure had dropped to 7 percent.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that people are hurting. Early last year, Indian Railways advertised about 89,400 new jobs. Government posts always are coveted in India — they mean job security and a decent salary — but more than 23 million adults applied for these positions, defying all

expectations. Earlier this year, the secretariat of the government of Maharashtra, a state in west-central India, advertised 13 waiting jobs in its canteen. There were 7,000 applicants, many of them university graduates.

India’s growth rate remains robust, but the benefits of the country’s growth have been concentrated almost entirely at the top, with grim implications for the working classes and the lower-middle classes, women and the young.

These effects aren’t just the accidental results of the government’s decision, say, to ban certain currency bills in late 2016 (which proved to be terribly misguided) or to transform the indirect tax system into the new Goods and Services Tax (a move in the right direction but that was poorly executed and hurt small businesses). Inequality has grown, in numerous ways, a recent report indicates.

The Modi government’s economic policy has been disproportionately focused on a few big corporations, neglecting small firms and traders, the agricultural sector and most workers. The results are now showing.

**KAUSHIK BASU**, the C. Marks Professor of International Studies and professor of economics at Cornell University, was chief economic adviser to the Indian government in 2009-12 and chief economist of the World Bank in 2012-16.



## The ‘ethics’ of Trump’s wall

Joseph W. Tobin

Is the border wall ethical? President Trump has suggested the wall is moral and those who oppose it immoral. His critics claim the opposite.

To answer this, we have to consider its effect on humans. What harm could a border wall cause to immigrants and refugees, all of whom are equal to us in the eyes of God?

Some people who cross the border are in desperate search of work to support their families. A wall would probably drive them into more remote areas of the desert or mountains, possibly to their deaths, as the forces driving them — violence, persecution and extreme poverty — are more life threatening than a risky border crossing. In fact, close to 8,000 migrants have died in Arizona and parts of Texas since the construction of the San Diego and El Paso sectors of the wall in the mid-1990s.

The latest arrivals at our border are primarily asylum seekers from the Northern Triangle of Central America, who, when they cross the border and ask for protection, are in compliance with both our domestic and our international laws — the Refugee Act of 1980 and the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocols.

A wall would prevent asylum seekers from asking for protection at any point along our border — their right under the law — and would leave many of them at the mercy of drug cartels and other criminal groups in northern Mexico. More humane ways to achieve border security can be found to avoid these harmful consequences, through technology, additional legal avenues for entry and policies that address the factors pushing migration.

You must also look at the *intent* of someone who wants to construct a wall in order to determine its morality. In this case, it is clear that Mr. Trump wants to deny entry to anyone crossing the southern border, even those who have a right to cross and seek protection and are no threat to us.

The administration has just instituted a policy known as “Remain in Mexico,” which requires asylum seekers to stay in that country until their hearings, a process that could keep them vulnerable to organized crime for



A Honduran asylum seeker and her daughter on the Mexican side of the border near Brownsville, Tex., last summer after being denied entry into the United States.

months or years.

Mr. Trump is not acting with concern for the impact of the wall on their lives, including those of children, who would remain subject to danger. He also ignores the adverse impact of the wall on the environment, landowners and border communities, like the harm it can cause to wildlife and vegetation, the livelihoods of ranchers and farmers and cross-border commerce.

Other policies his administration has pursued, including family separation, the rollback of asylum laws, family detention, the elimination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and termination of Temporary Protected Status for most of its beneficiaries, show that the administration’s intent is to rid the United States of as many immigrants — legal or otherwise — as possible.

The way in which Mr. Trump has argued for a wall also is instructive. In trying to secure funding, he has cast all immigrants as criminals and threats to national security by spreading misleading and inaccurate information

about them. His justification for the wall is based upon lies and smears against the vast majority of immigrants who are law-abiding and moral, but whom he paints as less than human.

The president likes to highlight violent crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, for example, but fails to point out that immigrants commit crimes, including violent ones, at a much lower rate than citizens. All Americans grieve the harm caused when a violent crime is committed. That does not mean they agree that a border wall is the most effective way to prevent it.

A wall itself is not immoral, but it can be constructed for an immoral purpose. President John F. Kennedy and President Ronald Reagan both resisted the Berlin Wall, which prevented millions in the Soviet Bloc from seeking freedom in the West. It eventually came down.

Immigration reform that is humane and honors our nation’s values must finally be enacted, and the root causes of global migration addressed. This is the moral direction in which the president should lead the nation.

**JOSEPH W. TOBIN** is the archbishop of Newark.

The New York Times

Whatever happens next, we’ll help you make sense of it.

Newspaper subscription offer: Save 66% for three months.

In unpredictable times, you need journalism that cuts through the noise to deliver the facts. A subscription to The New York Times International Edition gives you uncompromising reporting that deepens your understanding of the issues that matter, and includes unlimited access to NYTimes.com and apps for smartphone and tablet.

Order the International Edition today at [nytimes.com/discover](https://nytimes.com/discover)

Offer expires June 30, 2019 and is valid for new subscribers only. Hand delivery subject to confirmation by local distributors. Smartphone and tablet apps are not supported on all devices.







# SCIENCE LAB



KAREN REYES

## Where sloths find these branches, their family trees expand

Look closely up in the trees of a shade-grown cacao plantation in eastern Costa Rica and you'll see an array of small furry faces peering back at you. Those are three-toed sloths that make their homes there, clambering ever so slowly into the upper branches to bask in the morning sun. You might also spot them munching on leaves from the guarumo tree, which shades the cacao plants.

Scientists have long known that the guarumo is important to the diet of sloths. Its foliage is highly nutritious, available all year and easy for the creatures to digest. But in a new study published in Proceedings of the Royal Academy B, researchers report that a population of sloths with more guarumo trees in their cacao plantation habitat had more babies and were more likely to survive.

Their findings suggest that the tree's presence can help ensure the health of sloth populations even in environments that have already been disturbed by humans, like farms. It also shows how animals that have a specialized ecological niche, while traditionally thought of as vulnerable, can persist in changed circumstances as long as the resource that they depend on is available.

VERONIQUE GREENWOOD



LONG CHENG AND RYOSUKE MOTANI

### Prehistoric creature was like a platypus, but even weirder

No mammal may be more perplexing than the platypus. Attached to its furry, otterlike body

are four webbed feet, several sharp claws, a beaver tail and, of course, that iconic duckbill. The females lay eggs, and males sport venom-secreting spurs on their hind legs. One could only imagine how dumbfounded the first people to stumble upon these creatures were.

But if you were to wager a guess, they probably had a similar expression to that of Ryosuke Motani, a paleobiologist from California, when he initially encountered the fossilized remains of the extinct marine reptile called Eretmorrhhipis carrollidongi. "It's a pretty strange chimera of

features," Dr. Motani said.

Like the platypus, this recently discovered prehistoric creature had a duckbill. But then nature made it even weirder, adding plates on its back like a stegosaurus, a long tail like a crocodile, large paddlelike limbs and a tiny head with teeny eyes.

NICHOLAS ST. FLEUR

### Want a free tree? Many Detroiters say no thanks

Deborah Westbrook, a lifelong resident of Detroit, would love a tree in front of her home.

Nonetheless, when representatives from a nonprofit came to plant trees on her block five years ago, Ms. Westbrook said no. So did more than 1,800 Detroiters — a quarter of all eligible residents — from 2011 to 2014.

Why the high rejection rate? In a new study, researchers found that the biggest predictor of whether someone declined a tree, it turned out, was whether that person had negative experiences with trees — or with city workers or outsiders who, as one respondent said, "come in and try to 'do good,' but only half do the job."

Detroit was once known as "the city of trees," with more per capita than any industrialized city in the world.

But by 1980, more than half a million trees had died.

STEPH YIN



CARLOS OSORIO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

"We're all mildly addicted. I think that's obvious to see in our behavior."

Kimberly Young, a psychologist who founded the Center for Internet Addiction in 1995.

### Explorer of Australia is found down under

The remains of the British Royal Navy explorer who led the first known circumnavigation of Australia have been found in London by archaeologists excavating a burial ground where a railway station is planned.

The archaeologists identified the remains of Captain Matthew Flinders by the lead plate placed on top of his

coffin. He was buried at St. James's burial ground in 1814, but the headstone was removed in the 1840s, leaving his grave's location a mystery.

Flinders was commander of the H.M.S. Investigator when he navigated the coast of Australia, confirming it was a continent.

Among places named after him there include Flinders Station in Melbourne and the town of Flinders in the state of Victoria.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



FRANK AUGSTEIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS



NASA/JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, VIA SOUTHWEST RESEARCH INSTITUTE, VIA AP

4.5 billion years old and coming into focus

ONLINE: TRILOBITES

Daily nuggets of science for mobile readers: nytimes.com/trilobites

The icy rock that NASA's New Horizons spacecraft flew past on New Year's Day is coming into focus.

On Jan. 24, the mission team released the sharpest picture of the 21-mile-long body known officially as 2014 MU69 and nicknamed Ultima Thule.

Consisting of two roundish lobes that are fused together, it is believed to be an almost pristine leftover from the earliest days of the solar system, more than 4.5 billion years ago.

The spacecraft took the picture when it was 4,200 miles from Ultima

Thule, just seven minutes before its closest approach. From this angle, the shadows are more apparent, revealing a deep depression on the smaller lobe. This could be a crater, a pit that collapsed or an area that was blown out when gases escaped from the interior long ago.

Scientists can also better resolve light and dark patterns on the surface, including a particularly bright collar where the two lobes connect.

Even sharper pictures could be sent back in the coming weeks as the spacecraft travels farther.

KENNETH CHANG



# Weekend



GREGORY SMITH/SONY PICTURES

## When filmmakers cross a no man’s land

Hollywood’s vision of the border between the U.S. and Mexico is usually bloody, but other images sneak through

BY CHRIS VOGNAR

The Hollywood remake of “Miss Bala” came crashing into theaters in the United States on Friday, bringing a slam-bang, action-movie aesthetic to the 2011 Mexican-American film about a teenage girl who witnesses a gangland shooting in Tijuana and becomes an unwilling accomplice to very bad things. Like many borderland stories in American pop culture — the “Sicario” movies and the Netflix series “Narcos,” for example — the new film wrings thrills from the epidemic of narco-violence that claims lives on a daily basis.

Based on these movies and shows, which coincide with the current political debate over a wall between Mexico and the United States, viewers might think nothing but death unfolds on the border. Violence, after all, sells, much as sex does. It’s hard to find the vitality and color of life on the border amid all the on-screen gunfire and despair. It takes some digging to find alternatives to Hollywood’s view.

“The border is generally portrayed as a forbidding and terrifying no man’s land,” said June Carolyn Erlick, the editor in chief of ReVista, the Harvard-based journal of Latin America. Even some of the more fully developed border movies — including Gregory Nava’s 1983 gem, “El Norte,” in which a Guatemalan brother and sister crawl through a sewer pipe and do battle with rats in crossing from Tijuana to San Diego — conjure up this tone. “To me, that’s what the border is in movies,” Erlick said. “Rather than a bright, vibrant place, where a person lives on one side and goes to work on the other side, it’s a place of rats and darkness.” The scene is a terrifying vision in a film that does an



ENIAC MARTÍNEZ ULLOA/FOX INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS

exemplary job dramatizing the cultural adaptation necessary for people who cross the border every day.

Sometimes the darkness is replaced by a sort of washed-out brownish yellow, as in Steven Soderbergh’s drug-war epic “Traffic” (2000). Soderbergh used tobacco-tinged filters to make the Mexican side of the border seem desolate and otherworldly, giving it a different look from the rest of the film, shot with vari-

ous color schemes for American locations.

Of late, however, the primary color for border movies is red, as in a whole lot of blood. The never-ending narco wars have turned sadistic violence into a key component of border stories: mutilated bodies hung for public display; assassinated journalists; multitudes of disappeared (or desaparecido); massacre on a massive scale.

After three seasons, “Narcos,” which debuted in 2015 with a focus on Colombia and the cocaine empire of Pablo Escobar, moved to Mexico. The main character is the real-life figure Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo (played by Diego Luna), a former police officer who went on to start the sprawling Guadalajara Cartel. His nemesis on the other side of the border is a Drug Enforcement Administration agent (played by Michael

Peña), who, as in real life, is tortured and murdered by the cartel when he goes undercover to infiltrate it.

When American audiences think of border movies, they’re more likely to remember “The Border,” the bluntly titled 1982 melodrama starring Jack Nicholson as a morally conflicted border agent, or “Lone Star,” the 1996 murder mystery that traces several generations **BORDER, PAGE 22**

Top, Gina Rodriguez and Ismael Cruz Córdova in the “Miss Bala” remake. Left, the original film.



# Frocks and philanthropy



Vanessa Friedman

## UNBUTTONED

Arianne Phillips, the Oscar-nominated costume designer who became a public name thanks to her work with Madonna, hit her long, dark night of the red carpet soul a few years ago.

“I was completely burned out on GoFundMe and tired of feeling like a resister solely on social media,” she said on the phone from Los Angeles, where she had just finished working on “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood,” the new Quentin Tarantino film. “I kept thinking: What does all this waste and excess amount to?”

This may sound, halfway through the gowns-and-glam marketing marathon

Arianne Phillips, standing at right, and Carineh Martin, founders of Red Carpet Advocacy, or RAD. Below from left, Mandy Moore, Patricia Arquette and Elisabeth Moss have worked with RAD.



MAGGIE SHANNON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES



GREGG DEGUIRE/GETTY IMAGES



FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

that is the awards season, familiar. The Golden Globes, Critics’ Choices and SAGs are done; the Grammys, Baftas and Oscars are still to come.

Perhaps you, too, are beginning to get jaded by the endless stream of best-dressed lists, the fawning adjectives dripping in brand names. Perhaps you have, like I have, wondered what happened to the momentum of last year’s #TimesUp black-gowned solidarity.

But chances are you did not do what Ms. Phillips and her friend Carineh Martin, a luxury brand consultant, did next: ask the obvious question.

“Is it possible to take the fascination with celebrity culture and use it to inspire fans to do good?” Ms. Phillips said. To embrace our own most tabloid tendencies, acknowledge they aren’t going away anytime soon and exploit them, as Ms. Martin said, for a purpose.

This season will determine whether they are Sancho Panza and Don Quixote

tilting at windmills or Davids with an well-targeted slingshot.

That would be Red Carpet Advocacy, or RAD, founded last July to “change the conversation on the red carpet” so that it’s not just about frocks, but frocks and philanthropy, the two so intertwined that you can’t talk about one without the other. In January, at the Globes, RAD began to put it into practice.

Our discomfort with the marketing machine that the red carpet, once the province of all-too-human fashion inspiration and mistakes, has become is nothing new. It was expressed in #AskHerMore, that movement to banish the mani-cam and acknowledge actors on their way into a ceremony as more than advertisements for whatever brands they were representing officially (as paid ambassadors) or unofficially (as the recipients of free clothes). Not to mention the brief Globes and Cannes all-black fashion rebellions of last year.

Yet, as much currency as those moments had, they have not succeeded in changing the game in any real sense. Interviewers for E! still ask: “What are you wearing?” Websites and apps (including The New York Times) still run slide shows of arrivals with brand names attached to dresses. Readers, whether they want to admit it, still click on them in the millions (and if you don’t identify the dress, they complain).

And celebrities still need the paycheck that come with the endorsement gigs to finance their passion projects, indie films or stage forays.

You can’t put the genie back in the bottle. Ms. Phillips and Ms. Martin aren’t trying to, anyway. It’s their day job (or part of it), after all. They are just adding another element.

The pitch is simple: Stylist and celeb pick the dress or tux (and shoes and jewels and watch) said celeb wants to wear, whether because of a contract or be-

cause they love it or both. Then RAD goes to the brand and asks it to donate to the charity of the star’s choice. (The brand decides how much.)

And then, when clothes get mentioned, so does the donation — on the carpet during interviews, as well as in social media posts and news releases.

The relationship becomes less about shared profiteering and more about shared values. And it can be applied not just to the red carpet, but also to events (screenings, parties), retail partnerships and marketing campaigns.

“Arianne and Carineh are deal brokers,” said Karla Welch, a stylist who became RAD’s conduit to its first partner, Elisabeth Moss, when she dressed her for the Globes in Dior, Roger Vivier and Neil Lane, all of which made donations to the American Civil Liberties Union. “But deal brokers for social change.” (Ms. Moss was not paid by Dior.)

So really, what’s not to like?

“At the beginning everyone said, ‘Wow, I can’t believe no one has done this,’” Ms. Martin said. It was all very positive. Then it would go quiet.

“The red carpet is a moneymaking venture,” Ms. Welch said. But as anyone who has tried to report on the murky economic relationship between stars and brands knows, no one wants to discuss that.

And the fear was that mentioning donations would suggest a connection to some other sort of financial relationship. Which would run the risk of reminding viewers that maybe the dress a celebrity was modeling was actually chosen because, well, the brand offered the most money. Yucky! No one wanted that.

Even though, as Ms. Martin pointed out, “with RAD, there’s no pay to play.” The donation piece of the agreement is not part of the bidding war for a celebrity; it happens after the fashion conversation has become a fait accompli. (RAD is not a nonprofit, and Ms. Phillips and Ms. Martin take a 15 percent administrators’ fee from the brands on top of the donations, 33 percent of which they, in turn, donate to charity. The goal is to eventually turn RAD into a benefit corporation.)

For a brand and a celebrity, it’s more of an investment in the future relationship. Which may sound like a specious nuance or holier-than-thou posturing, but has become an increasingly important factor in endorsement deal making.

At the New York Times International Luxury Conference in Hong Kong last November, Steve Hasker, the chief executive of CAA Global, one of the biggest talent agencies in the world, told the story of a new client. A millennial actress, she had been offered a significant sum to be the face of a consumer brand. She turned it down.

The brand came back with another, multimillion-dollar offer. She turned it down again. She said she had researched the company and discovered that it had no women on its board, and that no sum of money would persuade her to sign on since its values were not her values.

“Any time you try to change the status quo, it’s hard,” Ms. Welch said. “But I also don’t think it’s that hard to ask for a bit more.” Resistance is beginning to chip away.

After Ms. Moss’s appearance at the Globes, Gucci signed on to support Tracee Ellis Ross, sponsoring a charity screening she hosted of “If Beale Street Could Talk.” According to Gucci, it donated \$25,000 to #MeToo and the Essie Justice Group through RAD.

David Yurman, the jeweler, is working with RAD on a social media campaign that will pair influencers and issues. Matchesfashion.com is going to host RAD-related events connected to Frieze Los Angeles and the Met Gala.

At the SAGs on Jan. 27, Mandy Moore wore Jason Wu, Niwaka jewelry and Jimmy Choo, and worked with RAD so that all of them contributed to Unicef. Patricia Arquette donned Christian Siriano, Stephen Webster and Roger Vivier, and it trickled down via RAD to Give Love, her clean-water charity.

Ms. Phillips and Ms. Martin are learning as they go.

Ms. Moss’s dressing decision around the Globes was so last-minute, for example, that the European brand headquarters were closed for the weekend, so the Gucci and Roger Vivier RAD-related social media language couldn’t be approved until after the event, which lessened the impact. But the women are beginning to believe they have proof of concept.

“It’s a paradigm shift,” said Ms. Welch, whose client Camila Cabello will be a RAD representative at the Grammys, to benefit Save the Children. As the good ship Oscars approaches, she continued, “you can get on board or not.”

“Is it possible to take the fascination with celebrity culture and use it to inspire fans to do good?”

# Sneakers made for strutting

BY ALEX HAWGOOD

**Name:** Salehe Bembury

**Age:** 32

**Hometown:** New York

**Now lives:** In a two-bedroom apartment in the Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

**Claim to fame:** Mr. Bembury is a cult designer of opulent fashion sneakers, first at Yeezy, where he designed combat and lace-up boots for Seasons 3 and 4, and now at Versace, where his futuristic, almost Japanime-inspired designs have earned praise from tastemakers, art stars and sneakerheads. Sneakers Magazine recently called him “one of the most ambitious creatives in the footwear industry.”

**Big break:** Before his street-style following, Mr. Bembury designed shoes at Cole Haan and Payless Shoe-Source. Wait, what was that last one? “In retrospect, it was highly informative because Payless makes every type of shoe imaginable at an inexpensive



cost,” he said.

His former boss at Cole Haan, who was working for Kanye West at the time, asked Mr. Bembury to submit his portfolio. “Apparently my work was well received, and I was flown out to meet him,” he said. He was hired three months later. “Getting to work with a genius like Kanye daily was an honor and extremely educational.”

**Recent project:** In November, Mr.

Bembury collaborated with the artist Takashi Murakami on “Sneakers for Breakfast,” an art installation at the ComplexCon street wear festival in Long Beach, Calif. For the show, Mr. Bembury and five other designers created archetypes of their “ultimate sneaker” that play with Mr. Murakami’s cartoonish iconography. The title came from “the idea that even at the breakfast table we were dreaming about sneakers,” he said.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAKE MICHAELS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Next thing:** At Versace’s pre-fall show in New York in December, Mr. Bembury updated the Chain Reaction sneaker, which features a chunky rubber sole that incorporates Versace’s chain-link logo. “It was an effort to make a branded element functional,” Mr. Bembury said.

For his next big idea, he is toying with a homage to retro ’90s sneakers designed by Steve Jobs for Apple. “I can’t talk about that yet,” Mr. Bembury

said, though he did post a prototype on Instagram. “Just wait and see.”

**Leaving a footprint:** As a black designer at a global fashion brand, Mr. Bembury is aware he has big shoes to fill. Friends and former colleagues have offered advice. “They reminded me there are not so many people who look like me in this world of high fashion,” he said. “It’s bigger than me, and I could be paving a way.”

Salehe Bembury, a sneaker designer for Versace, in his Los Angeles studio with some of his opulent designs.



WEEKEND

BOOKS

A bestiary for the ages

BOOK REVIEW

**Black Leopard, Red Wolf**  
By Marlon James. 620 pp. Riverhead Books. \$30.

BY MICHIKO KAKUTANI

The story kernel at the center of “Black Leopard, Red Wolf,” Marlon James’s surreal new fantasy epic, concerns the search for a missing boy. A hunter named Tracker, who is famous for his nose — “for finding what would rather stay lost” — is hired to find the lost child, who may or may not be the rightful heir to the throne of an ancient African empire. Tracker soon realizes that he is only one of many hired to find the boy — or proof of his death.

The search for the boy, it turns out, is a giant MacGuffin: The very first sentence of the novel informs us that the child is dead, and James uses the search as an armature on which to hang dozens of other tales, much the way he used the story of an assassination attempt on Bob Marley in his award-winning 2014 novel, “A Brief History of Seven Killings,” as scaffolding to create a tangled, choral portrait of Jamaica and its relationship with the United States.

In these pages, James conjures the literary equivalent of a Marvel Comics universe — filled with dizzying, magpie references to old movies and recent TV, ancient myths and classic comic books, and fused into something new and startling by his gifts for language and sheer inventiveness.

The fictional Africa in “Black Leopard, Red Wolf” feels like a place mapped by Gabriel García Márquez and Hieronymus Bosch with an assist from Salvador Dalí. It’s a magical, sometimes beautiful place, but also a place filled with malicious vampires, demons, witches and necromancers, given to murder, cannibalism and the hurling of evil spells. The action is often gut-wrenchingly violent — part “Blood Meridian,” part “Deadpool,” part “Game of Thrones.” Innocents are slaughtered in showdowns between rival groups. Curses and dark prophecies multiply. Hearts and eyeballs are bloodily plucked out.

Metamorphosis — of the sort made famous by both Ovid and Stan Lee — is one of the novel’s central themes. There’s Tracker’s passage into manhood through a series of harrowing adventures; and his love-hate relationship with the Leopard, a charismatic being who can incarnate himself as

both an animal and a man. Tracker also has a series of alarming encounters with shape-shifting creatures who may be adversaries or allies or both — including Sasabonsam, a menacing batlike creature who may have kidnapped the missing boy; and Nyka, a mercenary and former friend who once committed a terrible act of betrayal.

How did these characters reach these particular crossroads? Whom can Tracker trust, and can the reader trust Tracker — or is he as unreliable a narrator as the rivals and relatives who offer conflicting story lines, suggesting that truth is “a shifting, slithering thing”? Is his father really his grandfather, as his uncle asserts? Will he avenge himself on the men who killed his brother and father? Will his love for a group of orphaned, misfit children replace the anger in his heart and give him a sense of purpose? Why does Tracker hide his real feelings about the Leopard? And why does the Leopard tell him to “learn not to need people”? Such questions are not entirely answered in this volume — which is only the first installment of what James is calling his “Dark Star” trilogy.

In keeping with familiar fantasy and

sci-fi templates (from Harry Potter to “The Matrix” to “The Lion King”), the plot of “Black Leopard, Red Wolf” retraces many of the steps that the scholar Joseph Campbell described as stages in the archetypal hero’s journey. Like Luke Skywalker in “Star Wars” and Frodo in “The Lord of the Rings,” Tracker sets off on a journey that will take him away from home — to distant lands and kingdoms, where he faces a series of dangerous tests. And like many a comic-book superhero and antihero before him, Tracker grapples painfully with his own identity, even as he fights off a succession of opponents who threaten to thwart his mission. Along the way, as his path converges with that of others looking for the missing boy, Tracker becomes part of a motley group of mercenaries and misfits who squabble noisily and violently among themselves — and who bear more than a passing resemblance to the sorts of ragtag teams of rivals assembled in movies like “The Dirty Dozen,” “The Avengers” and “Guardians of the Galaxy.”

There are allusions in “Black Leopard, Red Wolf” not just to countless Marvel series and characters (like the Black Panther, Deadpool and Wolver-

In these pages, James conjures the literary equivalent of a Marvel Comics universe.

ine), but also to myriad literary works including Octavia E. Butler’s sci-fi classic “Wild Seed,” Angela Carter’s “The Bloody Chamber,” Salman Rushdie’s “The Satanic Verses,” Tolkien’s Middle-earth novels, Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea books, Jung’s writings on archetypes and the collective unconscious, and African epics about trickster and shape-shifting characters who symbolize chaos and change.

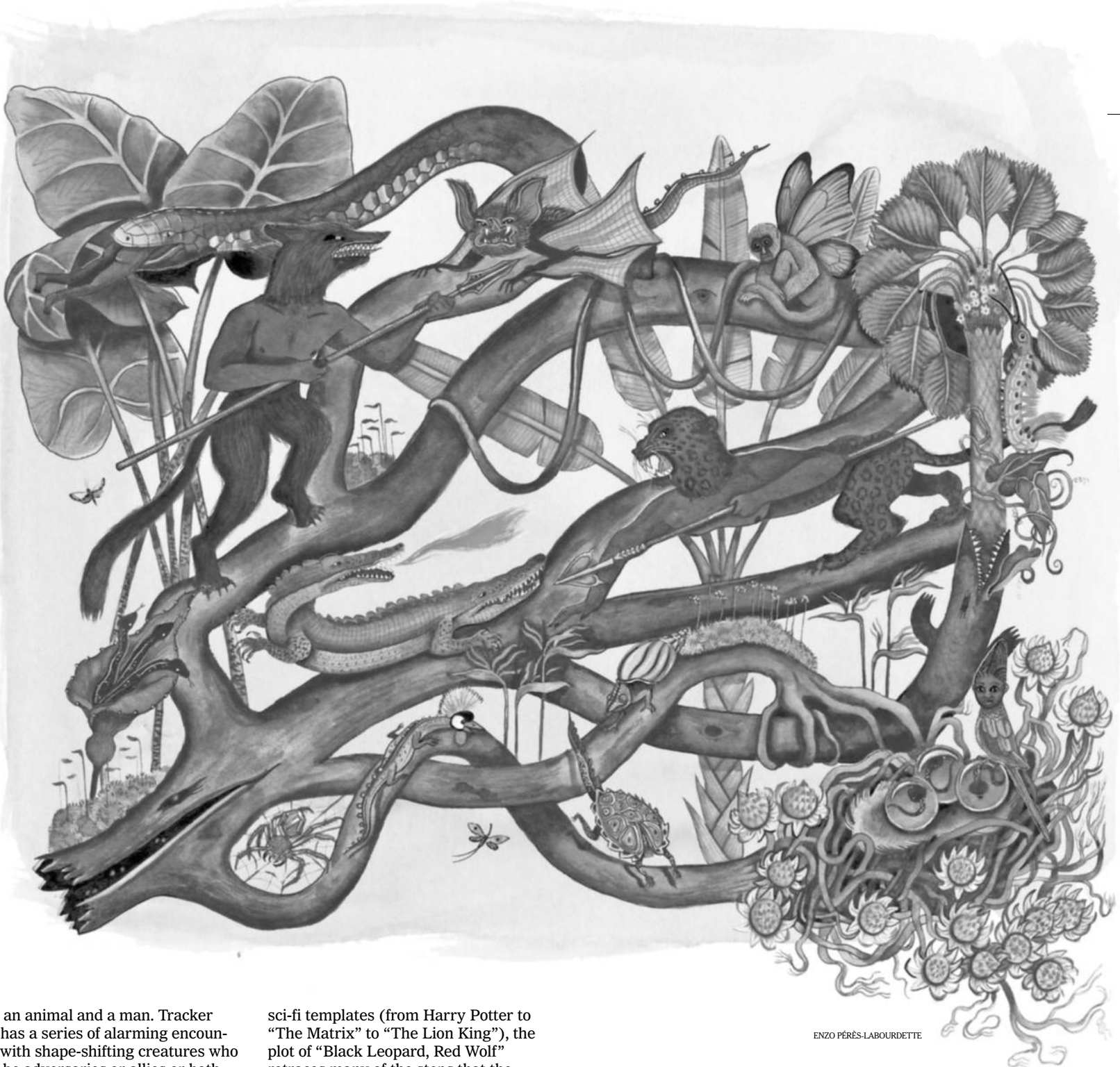
James is such a nimble and fluent writer that such references never threaten to devolve into pretentious postmodern exercises. Even when he is nestling one tale within another like Russian dolls that underscore the provisional nature of storytelling (and the Rashomon-like ways in which we remember), he is giving us a gripping, action-packed narrative. What the novel could have used is a little judicious pruning: As in superhero movies, the action sometimes assumes a predictable, episodic rhythm — one violent, bravura showdown after another,

strung together by interludes of travel and efforts to regroup and connect the dots.

What propels the novel forward is the same thing that fuels the best superhero movies and comic books: the origin stories of its central characters. We read to find out how Tracker became the Red Wolf and how the Leopard became the Leopard. In their beginnings are their ends: the keys to their strengths and vulnerabilities, the source of their drive and ambitions and fears, and clues to the larger goals that endow their quests for self-knowledge with some larger sense of mission.

With Tracker and the Leopard, James has created two compelling and iconic characters — characters who will take their place in the pantheon of memorable and fantastical superheroes.

Michiko Kakutani, former chief book critic for The New York Times, is the author of “The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump.”



ENZO PÉREZ-LABOURDETTE

By the Book

Marlon James



JILLIAN TAMAKI

The author, most recently, of “Black Leopard, Red Wolf” admires fantasy fiction that feels “wonderfully strange and alarmingly familiar at the same time. That and a woman or man who can wield two swords.”

**What books are on your nightstand?**  
Oyinkan Braithwaite’s “My Sister, the Serial Killer”; Yan Lianke’s “The Day the Sun Died”; Mervyn Peake’s “Gormenghast”; Anna Burns’s “Milkman”; Mike Mignola’s “B.P.R.D.: Plague of Frogs I”; and Dorothy B. Hughes’s “In a Lonely Place.”

When do you read?

Whenever I can steal time. Nowadays on train rides, except all my train rides are short so it can take me weeks to finish a book.

What moves you most in a work of literature?

A sense of sweep, which might be why I read so many historical novels. I like the feeling of having traveled in a novel. A journey of discovery and change so profound that the destination is beside the point. Sweep isn’t just about external journeys, but internal as well. It can be over years and decades, or across land and sea, as it is in “Song of Solomon,” by Toni Morrison, or “My Name Is Red,” by Orhan Pamuk. Or it can be from the kitchen to the spare bedroom, especially if it is accompanied by a seriously sexy amphibian, as in the case of “Mrs. Caliban,” by Rachel Ingalls.

Which genres do you especially enjoy reading? And which do you avoid?

Genre is such a ridiculous convention, as ridiculous as the idea of the Great American Novel. Growing up in Jamaica in the ’70s and ’80s, I never had the privilege of discriminating against books. I grabbed whatever I could borrow, steal or get for free. My sci-fi cinematic universe was not made up of films at all, but film novelizations of “The Empire Strikes Back” and “Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan.” I read whatever my friends’ parents tossed

books. I wish people would stop gifting me novels I’m never going to read and send me a nice cookbook.

Who is your favorite fictional hero or heroine? Your favorite antihero or villain?

Huckleberry Finn, because after all the years he is still the fictional character who charmed me the most. Sula, not because I like her — in fact, she would have been to me what she was to everyone, best friend and mortal enemy at once — but her simple statement, “Show? To who?” (in response to ex-friend Nel asking what she had to show for her life) changed everything for me. The idea that my life’s purpose was not to gain other people’s approval never occurred to me until I read that book. After reading that novel I literally rose and walked differently.

My favorite villain remains Bill Sikes from “Oliver Twist.” He unnerves me so much that I usually try to write about him with as few words as possible, because I’m usually overcome with chills before I even finish the sentence. I never cared much for antiheroes, who always seem like whiny men who thought they had problems but really didn’t. My American literature professor thought Stanley Kowalski in “A Streetcar Named Desire” was an antihero. I saw a self-duped, abusive, rapist loser who was in his own way as deluded as Blanche. I think I told him that he only thought Kowalski was an antihero because he wanted to get with Marlon Brando, who was the prettiest thing in that film and absolutely knew it.

You’re organizing a literary dinner party. Which three writers, dead or alive, do you invite?

Colette, because then the party would be in bed. Gabriel García Márquez, because his life stories would be crazier than his fiction. And Henry Fielding, because whoever wrote “Tom Jones” must be tons of fun, right? As long as nobody is talking about their work.

THE SUNDAY CROSSWORD

Ejection Letters

Edited by Will Shortz

Across

- 1 Patron of the high seas
- 7 Metric in digital journalism
- 13 Some marble works
- 18 Den mother
- 19 Make less stuffy
- 20 Opening
- 21 Reason for an ejection in the M.L.B.
- 22 Reason for an ejection in the N.B.A.
- 24 Bank takebacks, for short
- 25 Snug as a bug in a rug
- 27 Make mention of
- 28 N.F.L. star ejected from 102-Across
- 29 “Right on!”
- 30 Actress/singer Janelle
- 31 Rudimentary
- 32 Treats, as a sprain
- 33 Reason for an ejection in FIFA
- 37 The Bronx Bombers, on scoreboards
- 38 Intent
- 39 Soon
- 40 Student taking Torts or Property
- 43 Snowshoe hare predator
- 44 Brian with the album “Before and After Science”
- 45 Shorten
- 48 N.B.A. star ejected from 105-Across
- 51 Sound heard in Georgia?
- 53 Musician’s skill
- 54 Onetime Sprint competitor
- 56 Burn a perfume stick in
- 57 Meursault’s love in Camus’s “The Stranger”
- 58 Reason for an ejection in the N.F.L.
- 61 “Love, when we met, \_\_\_\_ like two planets meeting”: Ella Wheeler Wilcox
- 62 Sepals of a flower
- 63 Rolls up
- 64 M.L.B. star ejected from 87-Across
- 65 Belief in one’s role as a savior
- 67 Anatomical lashes
- 68 Drum held between the knees
- 69 On fire
- 70 \_\_\_\_ milk
- 71 English dialect in which “food shopping” is “makin’ groceries”
- 72 Aries and Taurus
- 73 Result of a judicial conflict of interest
- 76 Kabuki sash
- 77 Bloke
- 79 Polish up, in a way
- 80 “Actually, come to think of it ...”
- 83 Skill
- 84 Part of a “fence” in the game Red Rover
- 87 Seeming opposite of “ignorance is bliss”
- 92 Pollyannaish
- 95 Mends, in a way
- 96 Some flaws in logic
- 97 Plays charades, say
- 98 Tweeter’s “Then again ...”
- 99 Set down
- 100 Fruity soda brand
- 101 A Musketeer
- 102 Entry fee
- 105 Stew that’s decidedly not very spicy
- 107 Durkheim who helped found the field of sociology
- 108 Browned at high heat
- 109 Hit from behind
- 110 Array in a cockpit
- 111 Butterfly-attracting flowers
- 112 Actress Jean who played Joan of Arc in “Saint Joan”

Down

1 Well-formed

Solution to puzzle of January 26-27

W	E	B	A	P	P	A	T	T	H	A	T	A	S	I	M	O	V							
A	V	A	T	A	R	S	H	E	E	S	H	A	C	T	I	F	I	V						
D	I	S	T	R	E	S	S	E	D	H	A	I	R	D	R	E	S	S						
E	T	S	O	C	T	A	L	B	E	A	M	O	N	S	R	I								
D	E	F	I	L	E	D	M	A	N	I	C	U	R	I	S	T								
I	C	E	D		W	A	G		E	R	S		S	E	X	Y								
B	A	D	S	E	E	D		H	O	M	A	G	E		C	U	L	P						
L	I	D		D	I	S	P	A	T	C	H	E	D		T	A	I	L	O	R				
A	D	L	I	B		V	O	L		D	A	M	A	P	T	E	S	T						
B	E	E	N	E		E	M	E	R	I	L		A	C	L		D	E	E					
			D	E	G	R	A	D	E		T	E	A	C	H	E	R							
B	B	C		P	U	T		M	I	S	S	E		T	E	T	R	A						
E	R	A	S	E	R		U	N	A		P	O	T		S	C	H	E	D					
D	I	S	T	R	U	S	T	E	D		B	R	A	N	K	E	R		E	P	A			
G	E	L	S		C	A	V	E		A	T		N	E	W	I	S		O	Y				
D	A	Y	O		R	A	H		B	A	A		S	I	T	A								
I	N	K		D	E	R	A	N	G	E	D		C	A	T	I	L	E	M	A	N			
E	T	A		E	V	E	N	E	R		A	R	I	A	L		B	W	I					
D	I	S	I	L	L		L				I	O	N	E	D		M	A	G	I	C	I	A	N
O	N	E	S	T	O	P		L	A	S	S	I	E		E	A	R	N	I	T				
N	E	M	E	A	N		S	N	A	P	A	T		S	M	O	O	T	H					

	1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12		13	14	15	16	17
		18														19			
21																20			
24						25					27						28		
29						30					31						32		
33						34					35					36			
37						38					39					40		41	42
											44				45	46	47		
48	49	50													53			54	55
56																			
61																		60	
65																		64	
69																			
73	74																		
79																			

PUZZLE BY NATAN LAST / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

THE NEW YORK TIMES

- 2 “Receiving poorly,” in CB lingo
- 3 Retreats
- 4 Grazing land
- 5 Organization of Afro-American Unity founder
- 6 1960s group with a fabric-related name, with “the”
- 7 Joe can provide it
- 8 Bell-shaped flower
- 9 Writer/critic \_\_\_\_ Madison III
- 10 Hebrew “shalom” to Arabic “salaam,” e.g.
- 11 “Seven Samurai” director
- 12 Unchanging
- 13 Pinch
- 14 Drop from one’s Facebook circle
- 15 Poker-faced
- 16 Armistice
- 17 They may hit the ground running
- 18 Respectable
- 21 Genius
- 23 Head turner?
- 26 It gained independence from France in 1960
- 30 Principal
- 31 Discombobulate
- 34 King of morning TV
- 35 Poet who invented the terza rima rhyme scheme
- 36 Bay of Biscay feeder
- 41 Easter activity
- 42 “Move on already!”
- 43 Rodeo ring?
- 46 Politico Abzug
- 47 Members of the flock
- 48 Of base 8
- 49 One getting onboarded
- 50 Made into law
- 51 Bargain hunter’s delight
- 52 Margaret Atwood’s “\_\_\_\_ and Crake”
- 55 Standard of living?
- 57 Country south of Sicily
- 58 Amazon Prime competitor
- 59 Ireland, to poets
- 60 “Rainbow” fish
- 62 Tax pros, for short
- 63 They’re located between Samoa and Vanuatu
- 66 Entrance to a cave
- 67 Revolutionary group
- 68 Language family that includes Xhosa and Zulu
- 71 Monastery garb
- 74 Metonym for local government
- 75 They’re only a few stories
- 77 Noted Belle Epoque locale
- 78 Psyche’s beloved
- 81 Suggests
- 82 Typical summer intern
- 84 Forming an upward curve
- 85 Like oral history
- 86 FIFA star ejected from 65-Across
- 88 Choice of cheese
- 89 \_\_\_\_ Stark, Oona Chaplin’s “Game of Thrones” role
- 90 Russian ethnic group
- 91 Church title
- 92 Partitioned, with “off”
- 93 People of south-central Mexico
- 94 Director Coppola
- 100 Author Jonathan Safran \_\_\_\_
- 101 Land parcel
- 103 \_\_\_\_ Moines
- 104 Pique
- 106 Literary fairy queen



# Onstage Americana the European way

BASEL, SWITZERLAND

Three great playwrights are honored despite far from conventional stagings

BY A.J. GOLDMANN

In the United States, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams form a holy trinity of master playwrights. Their works are also well known in Europe, of course, but they are less often performed than the classics of Continental drama: for instance, the plays of Ibsen and Chekhov, which are frequently presented in updated or deconstructed productions. Several new stagings at leading playhouses throughout the German-speaking world show what can happen when American classic drama meets European theater practice.

A lurid pyrotechnic eruption seems a cheap and unnecessary stunt.

This season, the British director Robert Icke, 32, has set out to conquer the Continent. Just months after his first German-language production, "Orestie," in Stuttgart, won a prestigious directing prize, Mr. Icke, who is the associate director of the Almeida Theater in London, traveled to Basel to direct a new production of Miller's "The Crucible."

In London, Mr. Icke's distinctive productions have drawn praise and condemnation. The Times's critic Matt Wolf named his version of Ibsen's "The Wild Duck" one of last year's best productions, while The Guardian called it "a parasitic rewrite." Considering how controversial and edgy Mr. Icke's past productions have been considered, perhaps the most surprising thing about his "Crucible" (called "Hexenjagd" in German, which means "Witch Hunt") is how conventional it is.

The austere mid-20th-century courtroom (sets: Chloe Lamford) that serves as the setting for the production is a nod to the McCarthy-era hearings that in-



BERND UHLIG

spired Miller's famous dramatization of the Salem witch trials. At the start of the evening, Mr. Icke introduces a single metatheatrical flourish by giving Judge Hathorne an expanded role as the play's narrator. Sitting at the bench, he methodically reads out both stage and character descriptions. As the protagonists make their entrances, the women, in particular, object to these introductions.

This is a promising point of departure for play about mass hysteria and the demonization of women, yet the director doesn't dig any deeper into questions of female agency and representation in the three and a half hours that follow.

Instead, Mr. Icke places the production's focus squarely on the large ensemble. While there are many fine performances, the most astonishing and nuanced belongs to the Austrian actor Thiemo Strutzenberger. As the Reverend John Hale, the young minister sent to cast the devil out of Salem, Mr. Strutzenberger is hypnotic in his smoldering mix of tension and craftiness; a deceptively mild-mannered outsider whose convictions lead him first to zealotry and then remorse.

The young German actress Linda Blümchen makes Abigail Williams, who accuses her neighbors of witchcraft, a young woman increasingly drunk on



SANDRA THEN



MATTHIAS HORN

Clockwise from top left: "Long Day's Journey Into Night" at the Burgtheater in Vienna; "The Crucible" at Theater Basel; and "A Streetcar Named Desire" at the Berliner Ensemble.

her lethal power. And Katja Jung provides many of the trial's most gripping moments as a charismatic and smooth-talking Thomas Danforth, the head judge. Given all this fiery acting, Mr. Icke's final-act surprise, a lurid pyrotechnic eruption in the courthouse, seems a cheap and unnecessary stunt.

The year "The Crucible" had its premiere, 1953, also saw the death of O'Neill, the only American playwright who has won the Nobel Prize. Three years later, "Long Day's Journey Into Night," the semiautobiographical family epic that is often considered his master-

piece, was first performed.

At the Burgtheater in Vienna, the stage for Andrea Breth's desolate and dark production of the play is dominated by the skeleton of a whale and littered with rocks. It is a far cry from Jonathan Kent's 2015 Broadway revival, whose star-studded cast shuffled through realistically detailed early 20th-century interiors.

Ms. Breth, a prolific and influential Austrian director, uses stagecraft to explore the internal landscape of the play's characters. Within the black expanse of the stage, she clads her cast in white linen, and they shine against the darkness. Although we get the occasional Tom Waits song and the stage rotates frequently, there is little to compete with the fine-chiseled performances that direct our attention to the tragic cycle of addiction, recrimination and hopelessness that is the characters' lot.

The magisterial Sven-Eric Bechtolf brings the Tyrone family's paterfamilias, James, to life with arrogance, humor and raw tenderness. As the elder son, Jamie, Alexander Fehling shows bitterness, but also furious love, toward his tubercular sibling, Edmund, played by August Diehl (best known to American audiences for playing a Nazi with an acute ear for accents in Quentin Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds"). Mr. Diehl's

performance as the brother who is in many ways the play's protagonist is the production's most fully realized, and certainly the most poignant.

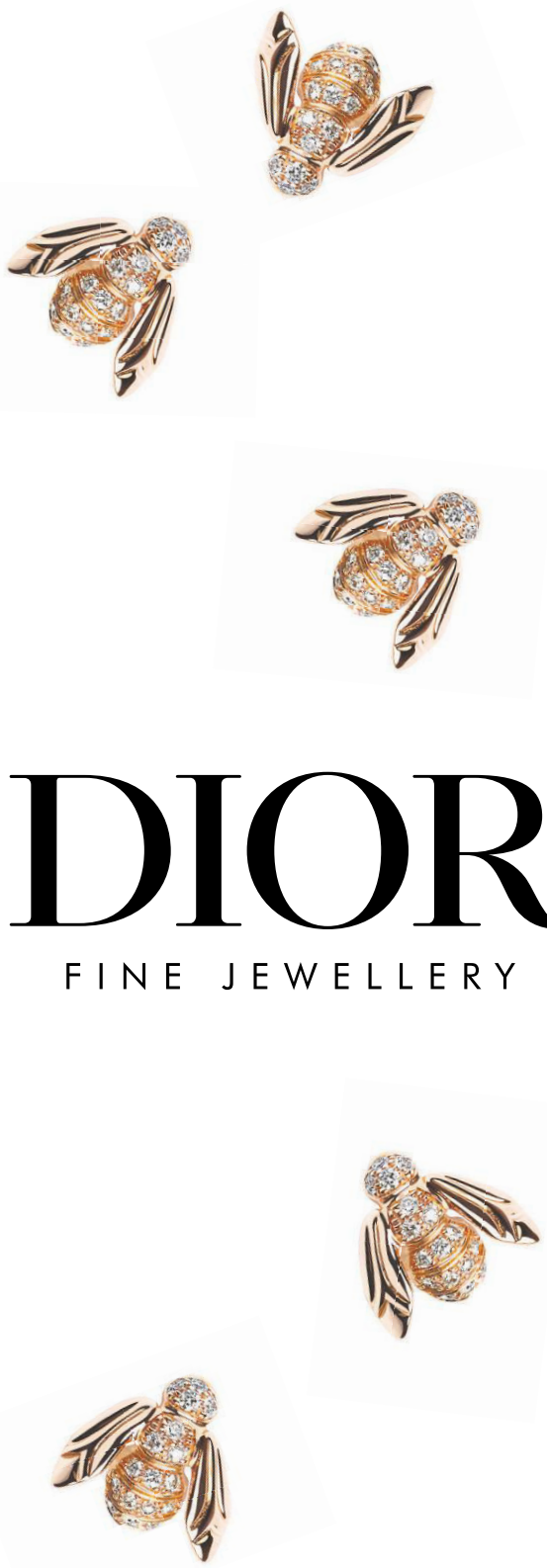
As the morphine-addled matriarch, Mary, Corinna Kirchhoff is the production's one weak link. Perhaps her exaggeratedly theatrical performance is meant to illustrate the depths of her illness and delusion. More often, however, it just comes across as hammy.

Mary longs for a real home, and the wasteland conjured by Ms. Breth and her set designer, Martin Zehetgruber, makes that sense of dislocation palpable. Blanche DuBois, the main character in "A Streetcar Named Desire," mourns the home she lost even as she tries to create a new one. In Michael Thalheimer's vertiginous and visceral production at the Berliner Ensemble, we feel Blanche's unease and shock at encountering her sister, Stella, and Stella's husband, Stanley Kowalski, in their sully, squalid New Orleans digs.

This entire production takes place, claustrophobically, inside a rectangular box (sets: Olaf Altmann) mounted high on the Berliner Ensemble's stage. This set, which looks as if it were carved out of a rusty iron curtain, slopes down steeply, giving the production a dangerous, off-kilter energy: We have a sense of the gravity-defying effort it takes for the actors to perform these punishing roles.

Dressed in angelic white, Cordelia Weges's Blanche always seems to teeter at the edge of the abyss. Like Mary Tyrone, Blanche is a flamboyant but unstable character. Ms. Weges resists the temptation to ham things up, however, imbuing her instead with elegance and pride. The Berliner Ensemble's versatile Andreas Döhler plays Stanley gruffly, without any rakish charm. Making him such a pure brute puts the play in an uncommonly heartless light, although Williams wrote these characters with more humanity than Mr. Thalheimer seems to think they deserve.

By European theater standards, this "Streetcar" is none too radical. Indeed, like his counterparts in Basel and Vienna, Mr. Thalheimer is faithful to the script in a way that many other directors working in Europe — and specifically in German-speaking theaters — are not. Perhaps this is an acknowledgment of the skill and precision with which these playwrights drew their characters and fashioned their dialogue. When the text's this good, why mess with it?



# DIOR

FINE JEWELLERY

LA ROSE DIOR COLLECTION  
Pink gold, white gold, diamonds, tsavorite garnets  
and pink sapphires.



# Did you see these songs?

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## Best Music Video is a Grammy category that's come into its own

BY JON CARAMANICA

Another year, another persistent worry that the Grammy Awards will once again fail to recognize boundary-pushing black performers.

The nominations are led by Kendrick Lamar, Drake and a crop of female artists — a promising shift after years of complaints about a lack of diversity at the music industry's big night. However, nominations don't necessarily turn into wins: Two years ago, Beyoncé was snubbed in the major categories; in 2018, Jay-Z received the most nominations of any artist and walked away empty-handed.

But at this year's ceremony, which will take place Feb. 10, there is one category in which the Recording Academy has nominated a surprisingly sophisticated set of performers, all of whom are black: Best Music Video. (In addition to the artist, this Grammy is



From above, Childish Gambino's "This Is America"; Janelle Monáe's "Pynk"; Jay-Z and Beyoncé's "Apes\*\*t"; and Tierra Whack's "Mumbo Jumbo." All of these videos have been nominated for a Grammy, along with Joyner Lucas's "I'm Not Racist."

and confidence, as natural in this hal-  
lowed space as in their home(s). In  
this, the later stage of their respective  
careers, engagement with high art has  
emerged as a crucial signifier, one  
beyond music, or fashion or other more  
conventional displays of material  
wealth. While "Apes\*\*t" doesn't feel as  
fully formed or thoughtfully executed  
as Beyoncé's "Formation," which won  
in this category in 2017, its near casu-  
alness is a loud statement.

All three of these videos are de-  
signed as provocations of a sort, think-  
piece-bait event releases designed to  
cut through online clutter. Put out a  
song on streaming services, and it  
might be swallowed whole by the  
ocean. In this crowded climate, creat-  
ing a vivid video is a survival strategy,  
especially with no tastemaker outlet (à  
la MTV) directly promoting/privileg-  
ing the format.

That is how the most effective music  
videos function today: as time-stop-  
ping conversation pieces. But this  
category also recognizes artists who  
understand how crucial video is to  
image formation, and who build it into  
their output from the earliest stages of  
their careers. Monáe's "Pynk" is ex-  
cerpted from a short film called "Dirty  
Computer" that accompanied her 2018  
album of the same name. Since her  
early days, Monáe has excelled at  
character development, and her music  
functions best as part of an audiovisual  
whole. "Pynk" is a frothy, playful cele-  
bration of sexual openness, straightfor-  
ward in narrative but inventive in  
presentation. It was part of a broader  
story she told last year, in art and in  
public life, about coming out as queer.

The 23-year-old rapper Tierra  
Whack is a natural visual eccentric and  
fantastical inheritor of Monáe, as well  
as of Missy Elliott, Busta Rhymes, the  
director Chris Cunningham and others.  
Her excellent 2018 debut album,  
"Whack World," was 15 minutes long,  
one minute per song, and released as  
one long video full of Whack inhabiting  
various oddball characters. Strangely,  
she's nominated here for "Mumbo  
Jumbo," a single that predated that  
album.

Where "Whack World" feels like an  
extended art project, "Mumbo Jumbo"  
scans as a micro horror film. Whack is  
in a dentist's chair, singing through a  
mouth retractor. At the end of her  
surgery, her smile has been exaggerat-  
ed into an overblown grin. She walks  
out onto the street, which is as decrepit  
as Glover's warehouse, and is sur-  
rounded by suffering people saddled  
with the same false grin — almost an  
echo of the hollow-eyed sunken place  
victims in "Get Out." The song is fine,  
sort of an extended melodic mumble.  
But for Whack, perhaps more than any  
of her fellow nominees, the video is the  
story.

Inventive videos have won in this  
category before: Janet and Michael  
Jackson's "Scream" in 1996, Missy  
Elliott's "Lose Control" in 2006, and  
"Formation." But more frequently, it  
has gone to the just-fine-enough (or  
just-expensive-enough) video for an  
otherwise very popular song, or to an  
artist so famous (say, the Beatles, in  
1997) that Grammy voters tick their  
box reflexively.

But moving forward, this category  
should be seen as an opportunity to  
embrace a whole new breed of musi-  
cian, one who reflects what has long  
been true but rarely acknowledged at  
the Grammys: that the job of a record-  
ing artist has changed, and that those  
now making the most vivid impact are  
as careful about how they look as how  
they sound.

awarded to the video's director and  
producer.)

In the Grammy context, the music  
video category — No. 83 out of 84 on  
the official list — is generally an after-  
thought. It was instituted in 1984, the  
same year MTV inaugurated its Video  
Music Awards, just as the medium was  
becoming central to star-making. At  
this moment — when artists are as  
likely to develop their audiences on  
YouTube as on any audio-only plat-  
form, and in which expertise in self-  
presentation and self-promotion is  
mandatory — the category feels essen-  
tial. The nominations recognize clips  
that shaped conversation as much as  
the songs they illustrate. Some of these  
videos are wholesale pieces of art in  
which the visuals and music are funda-  
mentally inseparable; sometimes the  
importance of the video itself trumps  
that of the song.

Childish Gambino's "This Is Amer-  
ica" and Joyner Lucas's "I'm Not Rac-  
ist" present competing narratives  
about the state of black life in this  
country. "Apes\*\*t," by Jay-Z and Bey-  
oncé (recording as the Carters), is a  
lush fantasia about dismantling old  
power hierarchies. Janelle Monáe's  
"Pynk" is a wild, psychedelic tour of  
female amorosness. And Tierra  
Whack's "Mumbo Jumbo" serves a  
strong dose of surrealism.

Of these nominees, "This Is Amer-  
ica" was the most influential and re-  
velatory last year, a stark, violent, ecstat-  
ic and darkly comic statement of intent  
from Childish Gambino, the musical  
alter ego of the actor Donald Glover. It  
was also the first music project from  
Glover that embodied the tension and  
savvy of his work in other mediums,  
particularly the television show "Atlan-  
ta."

In the video, Glover saunters, slides,  
shimmies and bolts his way through a  
warehouse. His body movements  
careen from the sensual to the frus-  
trated — he is a performer, a pleaser;  
but one at war with those impulses,  
torn between delivering joy and extin-  
guishing it. Sometimes he's nailing  
dances from the Instagram Explore

page or the video-sharing app Triller,  
but then he brakes hard, finds a gun  
and kills fellow performers offering  
less fraught forms of musical healing.

"This is America/Don't catch you  
slippin' up," he raps, setting terms for  
negotiating a white society that leaves  
barely any margin for black error. At  
the end of the video, as Young Thug  
sings, "You just a black man in this  
world/You just a bar code," Glover  
runs directly at the camera — first in  
darkness, only the whites of his eyes  
and teeth visible. Then he emerges  
into the light, frantic, no longer in  
control.

This burst of dystopian pessimism  
has a dim contrast in "I'm Not Racist,"  
which is almost grotesquely earnest  
and naively optimistic. It, too, takes  
place in a warehouse, where an ag-  
grieved, bearded MAGA-hat-wearing  
white man faces off against a skeptical  
black man. The 30-year-old Massachu-  
setts rapper Lucas (who is black)  
performs both verses, first from the  
perspective of the white conservative  
(with an abundance of racial epithets),  
and later, from that of the black man  
who can't bear to listen anymore.

As music, it is onerous agitpop — an  
egregious case of bothsidesism. As  
video, it's unintentionally comic,  
mawkish passing for sober. Through-  
out the clip, the tension grows; the  
white man stands up and hovers over  
his counterpart, pointing and yelling.  
Eventually, the black man stands up,  
flips the table, knocks the MAGA hat  
off his sparring partner's head. It  
seems as if there will be resolution,  
that the guy who insists he's not racist  
will finally come to the realization that  
he is. But then the men face each other  
and hug, a hilarious conclusion that  
pretends problems can be solved by  
simply airing grievances, not address-  
ing them. It feels antiquated and child-  
ishly hopeful, as if it had been released  
in a less tumultuous time — like, say,  
the early 2010s.

Both of these videos are premised  
on the anxiety that's born of systemic  
misunderstanding, confrontation and  
racism. For a recalibration of that



Sometimes the importance of the video itself trumps that of the song.

dynamic, there is "Apes\*\*t," the auda-  
cious Jay-Z and Beyoncé video filmed  
in the Louvre, which proposes that  
black beauty and creativity belong in  
museums, too, and that no exclusively  
white space should remain that way.

It is a lavish affair, aesthetically and  
conceptually, energized by the fact

that, on a basic level, the art on the  
Louvre walls is static, but the perform-  
ers in the space are not. When a passel  
of dancers, lying prone atop the Daru  
staircase, begins to convulse and come  
to life, it feels like watching birth.

Throughout the clip, Beyoncé and  
Jay-Z hold the screen with intensity



FILM

WEEKEND

# Jonas Mekas: Poet with a movie camera

The cine-evangelist and filmmaker sought endlessly to liberate cinema

BY MANOHLA DARGIS

“I live, therefore I make films,” Jonas Mekas once said, riffing on Descartes. “I make films, therefore I live.” Because he did both for so long, it seemed to me that he would, could, keep doing both forever. But Mekas, a filmmaker, poet, philosopher and evangelist, and one of life’s tireless adventurers, died Jan. 23 at 96. Trying to measure his influence on American cinema is difficult because it was so profound. Titans like Louis B. Mayer helped build Hollywood; Robert Redford created Sundance, the industry’s pliable alternative. Mekas sought to free cinema.

Mekas rallied for cinema’s independence long before there was a Sundance and all the American indie rest. In 1960, he put that fight into a manifesto, “Cinema of the New Generation,” which he published in Film Culture, the landmark magazine that he and his brother, Adolfas, helped found. The modern world, Mekas argued, had created humans who needed a cinema that was modern in its style, subject and temperament. Like the greatest manifestoes, this one breathes fire. He decried the “long-dead styles and approaches” of official cinema and “the insincerity, the pose and the business way of life that seeps through Hollywood films.” Can I hear an amen?

His touchstone was the French New Wave, which, Mekas recognized, had been influenced by an earlier generation of directors like Howard Hawks and Roberto Rossellini. Shaking loose of familiar film forms, these directors infused their work with a “spontaneous, even haphazard flow” and details that didn’t necessarily serve the plot but created “a live, natural and fluent quality.” In the new “cinema of the author,” what mattered was “HOW it is said and by WHOM” — the style that conveys modernity. These were films imprinted with the personality of their creators, which sounds like Mekas’s version of what his colleague Andrew Sarris called the auteur theory.

In his manifesto, Mekas put the cinema of liberation in the larger context of a modern art that emphasized aesthetic form but also real life. He saw the same glimmers of new-wave freedom in two American films: “Shadows,” the debut feature from John Cassavetes, a foundational figure in American independent cinema (Mekas only championed the original one-hour “Shadows”), and “Pull My Daisy,” from the artist Alfred Leslie and the photographer-filmmaker Robert Frank. A mischievous blast, “Pull My Daisy” isn’t about anything, really, just life and the spontaneous combustion created by a railroad worker (the artist Larry Rivers), his wife (Delphine Seyrig) and a ragtag group of interlopers played by, among others, the poet Allen Ginsberg.

Mekas wrote that “Pull My Daisy” could be seen as a Beat film, but he saw it more rightly as “a portrait of the inner condition of an entire generation,” work that was representative of what he anointed the New American Cinema. His observations about “Daisy” — like his praise for spontaneous, haphazard cine-flow and the freed camerawork of the avant-garde deity Stan Brakhage — point to the artistic direction that Mekas would embrace. His early movies, like “The Brig,” a drama with actors, were part of an effort to create an alternative to the studios. Over the years, Mekas moved away from “the conventional, dead, official cinema” to personal film, an evolution traceable in his writing for The Village Voice, where he was a movie columnist.

In time, he found his voice while he continued advocating a free cinema. He showcased avant-garde film, fought censors (he was arrested) and helped create an alternative infrastructure, like the artist-run distributor the Film-Makers’ Cooperative. His own film output was vast and, at times, sublime. The monumental “Walden” (1969) — “diaries, notes and sketches” divided into sections totaling 180 minutes — is a slipstream of images of people and places interspersed with blasts of music and noise, written fragments and voice-overs. Filled with tremulous beauty, the film is — as Thoreau wrote of his “Journal” — a record of joy and ecstasy.

Mekas’s “Walden” makes for hypnotic watching partly because you can feel his imprint throughout, in bits of text, the quavering hand-held images and a voice that, in moments, reminds



EDU BAYER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



JONAS MEKAS/REVOIR



JONAS MEKAS/REVOIR

Top, Jonas Mekas in 2017. Left, the filmmaker in his 180-minute “Walden,” from 1969. Above, another image from that film.

the United States.

He was 26 when he and Adolfas landed in New York in 1949 along with 1,352 other displaced persons. The brothers moved to the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, and Jonas worked in manufacturing in Long Island City in the borough of Queens. He visited museums, got fired, struggled, watched “The Blood of a Poet,” bought a Bolex 16-millimeter camera. “In Hollywood, it’s much simpler: it’s done with money,” he wrote in 1950. “But we are trying to do it with our own last miserable pennies.” People said that the cinema made him mad. “But today, if you don’t want to sell yourself for money and work work work,” he wrote, and if you dreamed of being an artist, you had to become mad.

He wrote about his early days in his hauntingly elegiac memoir, “I Had Nowhere to Go,” a collection of diary entries that cover 1944 to 1955 and that he began while in a Nazi labor camp. Published in 1991, the memoir opens with some background about his early life in Lithuania, the Nazi occupation, and the brothers’ departure and detention. Mekas wrote that before he was interned, he had engaged in “various anti-German activities.” He also wrote that he didn’t know anymore “is this truth or fiction,” a thread that Michael Casper amplified in a 2018 article in The New York Review of Books that accused Mekas of distorting his history.

The grim charges are that Mekas supported the Nazi occupation and worked for Nazi publications, although Casper writes that none of Mekas’s writing was anti-Semitic. Mekas and his circle saw the Germans as liberating them from the Soviets; and he characterized the newspapers as provincial, not Nazi. Casper wrote that “Mekas’s life during the war years was more complicated than he makes it out to be.” In a response, the

art critic Barry Schwabsky lamented that Mekas had written for these papers and noted his memory lapses but also wrote that “Mekas’s own explanation for his inaccuracies — the trauma of living amidst so many murders, and the need to respond to them as a poet if at all — seems worthy of more respect.”

This seems right and fair, and I don’t believe the revelations lessen Mekas’s work. Casper agrees. “As for Mekas’s films,” he wrote, “the truth of his life does not diminish the beauty of his work; it complicates and even enhances it.” I wonder what Mekas would make of that enhancing comment. It is painful to think that the last year of his life was clouded by this. It is also hard not to wish that he had made other choices when he was young and joined the partisans in the woods. But he didn’t. “If you want to criticize me for my lack of ‘patriotism’ or ‘courage,’” he wrote in his memoir, “you can go to hell!” Instead, he was in a Nazi labor camp and he survived.

In time, he found his way to New York, the home where he made films and history. This brings me back to Mekas’s line about making films to live, which he delivers in “Walden” over images of a wedding, an event that can seem less interesting to him than the laughing, smoking and chatting people around the couple. The darkly colored sequence is jagged-looking and often out of focus, and the quick cutting and rapid, agitated camera movements at times turn it into an impressionistic blur. Mekas utters his film-live comment, pauses and then repeats it with a crucial difference. “I make home movies, therefore I live,” Mekas says, “I live, therefore I make home movies.” Only recently, while rewatching “Walden,” did I finally grasp the full implications of his use of “home movies,” and how for him these two words had become inseparable.

He showcased avant-garde film, fought censors (he was arrested) and helped create an alternative infrastructure.

me of Andy Kaufman’s Latka on the TV show “Taxi.” Created from footage that Mekas shot over five years, this self-described film diary is filled with quotidian loveliness: a traveling shot of a New York sunrise taken from a train, a woman’s upturned head bathed in sunlight. And always there are Mekas’s friends — so many friends — the famous and the now-forgotten laughing, eating, getting married and making art while living ordinary lives teeming with playing children, wandering animals and all the blooming, buzzing rest.

I met Mekas in the late 1980s after I

started writing for The Voice about avant-garde cinema. He recognized that my last name is Lithuanian, which obviously amused him. He was a vibrant, persistent presence whether in the audience at a screening or at Anthology Film Archives, the cinematheque he co-founded. Over the years, I wrote about his work and in 2005 interviewed him just before he left for the Venice Biennale, where he represented Lithuania. He was 82, filled with plans and, he animatedly confided, in love. Later, I sent him a newspaper article about the ship, the General Howze, that brought him to





ENIAC MARTINEZ/FOCUS FEATURES

# Hollywood and the border

**BORDER, FROM PAGE 16**

of a law enforcement family in a small Texas border town. These aren't bad movies, but their perspective, despite inclusive intentions, is primarily Anglo. This generation's defining work of American mass-culture storytelling on the border might be found offscreen, in Don Winslow's trilogy of drug-war novels, "The Power of the Dog," "The Cartel" and "The Border," which comes out Feb. 26. They indulge in plenty of sex and carnage, but they also paint a grandly scaled portrait of political corruption on both sides of the border, particularly in the States. Winslow conveys as much excitement about the Iran-contra scandal, Nafta and Senate subcommittees as he does murder and mayhem. His driving premise: The drug war de-



CINECOM PICTURES

"Now we're beginning to understand the border as a place of electronic surveillance and drones."



RICHARD FOREMAN JR./LJONSGATE

stroys everything it touches in Mexico and the United States. The trilogy is propulsive pulp fiction with literary heft, a hybrid of "The Godfather" and "War and Peace."

There are certainly narrative features from Mexico about the border, including "Al Otro Lado" (2004) and "Desierto" (2015), with Gael García Bernal. But if you're seeking an antidote to sensationalism, you might look to documentaries.

For instance, Bernardo Ruiz's 2015 film, "Kingdom of Shadows," takes a sober look at how drug violence affects regular people on both sides of the border. His 2012 film, "Reportero," follows the staff members of a Tijuana news-weekly who execute a different kind of border crossing: Correctly determining that printing in Mexico is too dangerous, they set up shop in California and truck tens of thousands of issues back to Mex-

ico, where they are distributed to readers. Ruiz's documentaries have the reportage to go with the storytelling; he's not terribly interested in cheap thrills.

A dual Mexican-American citizen who moved to the States when he was 6, Ruiz spends time on both sides of the border, interviewing the kind of people who don't turn up in "Miss Bala" or "Narcos." He understands the flash-and-action appeal of such enterprises, but also sees a



MAYA ENTERTAINMENT

**Top, "Sin Nombre." Middle, "El Norte." Left, the first "Sicario" film. Above, "Sleep Dealer."**

need to tell other kinds of stories. "Like a lot of people, I have a kind of narco-fatigue," he said. "We're getting to a point where we're awash in media around this issue. My fear is that we're getting farther and farther away from the impact it has on ordinary, day-to-day people."

The current situation is complicated by the inextricable relationship between Mexican-American pop culture and the drug violence that claims a vast majority of its victims in Mexico. Shaul Schwarz's 2013 documentary "Narco Cultura" illustrates the back-and-forth in devastating fashion. On the American side, pop-star wannabes write narcocorridos, songs that celebrate the murderous exploits of vainglorious cartel killers, who, in turn, pay quite handsomely to have their deeds chronicled to musical accompaniment. It's a toxic blurring of the line between life and art.

Not all narrative border features fit into predictable and grisly patterns. The Peruvian-American director Alex Rivera's 2009 film, "Sleep Dealer," combines social consciousness with future shock sci-fi to create something utterly original. The characters in this near-future world long for nodes, electronic jacks embedded in the skin that plug into a virtual-reality drone system in Tijuana and that allow them do dangerous jobs in America. In other words, they cross the border without having to cross the border.

"Sleep Dealer" is a sly commentary on immigration and labor policy. Desperate for cheap labor, but not for the people who do it, the United States has found a way to import the work while leaving behind the worker.

Ruiz sees "Sleep Dealer" as an example of how modern border movies can push beyond the routine. "The older vision of the border was almost like a classic western with cowboys and Indians, but in a different framing," he said. "Now we're beginning to understand the border as a place of electronic surveillance and drones. Understanding it in that context is really important, and it also goes beyond the current rhetoric around the border, which is pretty unsophisticated."

Some of the most resonant border movies, however, are westerns, particularly the cycle of Mexico westerns popular in the late '60s and early '70s. These ranged from the condescending ("The Professionals") to the surreal ("El Topo").

The gold standard of the Mexico western remains "The Wild Bunch," Sam Peckinpah's film that sends a band of rogues across the border as they flee from bounty hunters at the beginning of the 20th century. Once in Mexico, they're hired by a tyrannical, counter-revolutionary general at war with Pancho Villa's troops. Mexico, a lawless land on the other side of America's rapidly closing frontier, is the end of the line for the mercenary Bunch. As this film makes clear, movies were indulging in borderland bloodshed long before the reign of the narco-kings. Orson Welles's "Touch of Evil," from 1958, also fits this mold, depicting the border as a land of dirty cops covering up murderous deeds.

Indeed, border movies have been around just about as long as cinema. "We have a long tradition of border films since the Mexican Revolution early in the last century," said Adriana Trujillo, the co-founder and former artistic director of the BorDocs Documentary Forum, which focuses on films about the border. That long tradition includes Emilio "El Indio" Fernandez, who played General Mapache in "The Wild Bunch." In a career stretching back to the 1920s that covered both performing and directing, he acted in films on both sides of the border.

Regardless of tone, scope or format, one thing is certain: There are a million stories on the border still to be told. As in most cases, bloodshed is what sells, and it's what usually gets converted into mass entertainment for Americans. If you look hard enough, however, you'll find work that transcends sensationalism and locates essential ideas about life and death that apply to either side of any border.







# Glamour of the past that never went away

A scenic Swiss town is prime territory for those who love outdoor adventures, robust Alpine food and old-school clubs

## 36 Hours in St. Moritz, Switzerland

BY LAURA RYSMAN

A tiny Swiss mountain town with a big, glitz-infused name, St. Moritz is the winter getaway that made the ski holiday a high-life ideal. As far back as the 1860s, a patrician British contingent was spending the cold months in the winter sun here; by the 1960s, the jet set had anointed St. Moritz the hallowed ski spot of wealthy scions and the internationally fabulous. Amid all the dazzle and dizzying prices, though, the town's character endures: Swiss, snowbound and sports-obsessed. Tourist life remains old-fashioned, revolving around the ski lodges and the storied Kulm, the slope-side Suvretta House and the buzz-filled Badrutt's Palace, the grand hotels where heavy Alpine furniture never goes out of style.

### Friday

**Ski in the city** 2 p.m.  
A host of the Winter Olympics in 1928 and 1948, St. Moritz is prime snow-sports territory, with a paradise of idyllic paths for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and sledding. Still, downhill skiing is the siren call of these mountains. Outside town, Corvatsch offers skiers daredevil verticality, but St. Moritz's own Corviglia has glorious expanses of snowy slopes. (Day passes start at 50 Swiss francs, or about \$50, depending on the week.) Warm up frozen toes afterward with a hot drink at Alpinahütte, where you'll find skiers reviving with glühwein (mulled wine), skiwasser (hot water with raspberry syrup and lemon) and bull shots, a 17-franc concoction of vodka and consommé.

**Aperitivo** 6:30 p.m.  
Badrutt's Palace is the heart of St. Moritz society. The hotel's remodeled King's Social House, said to be the oldest club in Switzerland, serves dinner and cocktails to a crowd that stays late to dance in its basement lounge. But there's even more action at the plush Renaissance Bar: Badrutt's pocket-size, antique smoking lounge, known to regulars as Mario's. Around the fireplace, scores of merrymakers pack the velvet banquettes and armchairs, lighting cigars with matches in sterling silver cases and inviting new acquaintances for rounds of Mario's signature cocktails (like the hot negroni, with Campari, red wine, cranberry and juniper berries for

sants and cakes will most likely convince you of sweeter plans. There's no better place to try an Engadine nusstorte specialty: a sticky shortbread confection of walnuts and caramel (4 francs) to be enjoyed with coffee.

**Steam therapy** 10 a.m.  
For those in need of a bit of recovery after the previous day's slopes, the Ovaverva bathhouse (entrance, 30 francs) is a sleek Swiss palace of modern spa facilities. It features saunas, steam rooms, hot tubs, an outdoor heated pool and relaxation rooms fronted by sprawling glass walls with a view of the pines and the mountains. Kiddie pools offer entertainment for the very young, and some invigoratingly fast water slides offer thrills for all ages. A full line of massages can be arranged (60 to 185 francs), but for more serious treatment, Heilbad next door offers medical-grade physical therapy and therapeutic massages (55 to 120 francs).

**Lunch on high** noon  
Strap on your snow gear and head for the peaks to glimpse the summit-surrounded valley that nestles little St. Moritz in its lakeside basin. The Chasellas ski lift — an eight-minute glide above the mountainside — deposits strap-hangers at the Suvretta House's Trutz Chalet, a lunchtime oasis of old-fashioned stone and timber at 7,200 feet above sea level, with views over the whole of the Upper Engadine. Diners fuel up with the simple, robust dishes of Alpine lodge cuisine: rösti potato pancakes and bratwurst, polenta with porcini mushrooms, lamb Wiener schnitzel and more. Lunch plates average around 30 francs.

**Singular souvenirs** 2:30 p.m.  
Via Serlas and its byways have the standard international luxury names, but a number of niche boutiques make shopping in St. Moritz special. Faoro, a stylish clothing store with a cafe, sells its own line of Italian-made sweaters and smart-looking versions of traditional bündner mountain-guide outfits. A few doors down, Ebnetter Biel uses a fleet of embroiderers to stitch tablecloths and napkins with everything from local fauna to seminude cabaret dancers; it also sells lederhosen for children and traditional leather Appenzeller belts. Nearby, Lamm has been devoted to all things cashmere since 1935.

**Snack shop** 4:30 p.m.  
Several St. Moritz shops offer Alpine specialties that deserve a taste. Pur Alps has a casual cafe and sells six varieties of apple juice in its shop, along with jams, cheeses and other local products. Hatecke, a fourth-generation butcher shop in a modern space, sells vacuum-packed, housemade lamb, venison and other sausages, and serves a small

25 francs) and the popular club sandwich (available for home delivery, via Badrutt's slick black Rolls-Royce).

**Dinner and dancing** 9 p.m.  
Sure, most of the Moncler-clad masses are here to ski, but why here? For the après-ski scene. At La Baracca, neighborly fraternizing over dinner is the norm, and dancing both around and on the long tables generally ensues soon after. The music is loud; the food is unadorned Alpine home cooking, with dishes like beef carpaccio with pesto and mashed potatoes (49.50 francs). It's an intimate and unpretentious affair that packs in locals and party-loving visitors.

### Saturday

**Breakfast treats** 8 a.m.  
In the morning, head to Hanselmann's pastry shop, a classic since 1894, whose elaborate rose- and buttercream-swirled exterior signals the sugarcoated delights within. A full breakfast menu offers eggs and other savory ways to start the day, but the bakery's cases of crois-

menu of fresh soups and sandwiches. And you weren't going to leave Switzerland without chocolates, were you? At Läderach, a dizzying array of sumptuously cocoa-rich truffles, barks and holiday morsels await.

**New Alpine cuisine** 8:30 p.m.  
With its Alpine recipes of locally sourced ingredients, the petite Dal Mulin is the rare St. Moritz restaurant that serves elegant, inspired food and doesn't glut its menu with heavy interpretations of Italian standards or additions of lobster, caviar and truffle to justify big-ticket prices. Dishes, which rely on locally sourced ingredients, include a light beetroot soup, enlivened with a careful balance of horseradish and caraway seeds. Mains, like seared codfish with salsify and miso hollandaise (52 francs), and venison loin with savoy cabbage, celery and juniper (58 francs), are complemented by an extensive, thoroughly researched wine list.

**Nightcap** 11 p.m.  
The long, snooty shadow of St. Moritz's old winter gentry is still discernible in the remaining private clubs that are key



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA WYNER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

to social life here. The Corviglia Club is linked to the mountain's ski lodge, while the Cresta Club's small numbers rally around its toboggan run, a death-defying, headfirst solo journey down an ice-covered chute, which opened in 1884 and is allowing women to ride for the first time this year. But in the darkest hours, Dracula is the place to go. Linked to the Olympic Park's bob run, the club was started by the photographer, industrialist and infamous playboy Gunter Sachs in 1974. Today the lofty wooden lodge serves cocktails and occasionally hosts bands. Though entrance is reserved for club members and their acquaintances, guests of the Kulm hotel, the Suvretta House and Badrutt's Palace can get help reserving from the concierge. Others can try their luck by arriving, decently dressed, before midnight.

### Sunday

**Fast track** 11 a.m.  
For a jolt of a joy ride, walk through the lovely spruce-lined knolls of Kulm park to the starting point of the fabled St. Moritz-Celerina bob run. Intrepid visitors can book a high-speed trip, equipped with little more than a sleigh and a helmet to hurdle down the ice of what's billed as the world's only naturally occurring bob trail. Bobsleds carry four passengers; up to two may be novices. The hefty 269-franc ticket includes a celebratory pin and certificate and a glass of bubbly to take the edge off. Observing is free, and electrifying.

**Snacks and skates** 2:30 p.m.  
For snacks and hot chocolate, stop by the Kulm Country Club. The club over-

looks the ice-skating rink in the Olympic Park, which offers skate rentals for 22 francs. Wooden bobsleds line the ceiling, old ski poles mark the doors, and black-and-white photos of St. Moritz's Olympic competitions festoon the walls.

**Art in the Alps** 4 p.m.  
St. Moritz and the Engadin Valley that encompasses it have a long history of attracting artists and intellectuals. In recent years, that cultural legacy has flowered anew, with the openings of contemporary art venues like the Muzeum Susch, the Stalla Madulain, the artist Not Vital's castle-turned-gallery and the art-filled Hotel Castell, all in the surrounding valley. Stop by the Segantini Museum before it closes in March for renovations to view works by the artist Giovanni Segantini, including his significant "Life, Nature and Death" triptych.

**The slopes above the Suvretta House hotel in St. Moritz, Switzerland.**



Trutz Chalet, a lunchtime oasis of old-fashioned stone and timber.

We're having an open house. And you're invited.

From urban condos to mountain castles and island getaways, discover the new International Homes section in the Weekend edition and enjoy a fresh perspective on the global property market.

Starts Saturday, February 23.



The New York Times

subscribe.inyt.com