THE BERLIN JOURNAL

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Number Thirty-Eight 2024–25

TRANSPARENCY
by Daniel Jütte

THE VIEW FROM BARBOUR COUNTY
by Jefferson Cowie

RETHINKING CAPITALIZATION
by Nell Irvin Painter

ARTIST PORTFOLIO
by Ken Krimstein

THE SEQUEL
by Mona Simpson

NO WAY OUT
by Michael Kimmage

SNOWMAN
by Amy Waldman

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Inversion Concerns

When George III's troops surrendered at Yorktown to the Continental Army of the upstart United States, the British military band played a song called "The World Turned Upside Down." Or so generations of American high-school students have learned from their textbooks. While there remains some question as to whether this post-defeat musical interlude actually occurred, citation of the ballad, which traces back to England in the tumultuous 1640s (think civil war, Cromwell, regicide) perfectly conveys the message that this inversion—the defeat of king and empire by ragtag rebels—was truly world historic.

As I write this, I'm struck by the feeling that the nightly news ought to open with another round of "The World Turned Upside Down." Consider recent events: The United States had seemed locked in a conflict of geriatric white men, with both sides screaming that American democracy and the future of the nation were at stake. The race, oddly, between an increasingly frail Democrat who could boast of a set of astonishing legislative achievements and a Republican disruptor who would Make America Great Again had left much of the country yearning for another choice. And then, lo and behold, another choice materialized, in the form of a Black/South Asian woman, Vice President Kamala Harris. Never before had a presidential contest been, well, turned upside down by the departure of a nominee little more than a hundred days from the first Tuesday in November. Virtually overnight, Harris shot to the lead nationally and in many of the swing states, where the national decision will be decided. The first presidential contest between an incumbent and a near-incumbent was not what a change-hungry nation wanted. Who knows what other reversals might lie ahead in a race that could well be decided by a few tens of thousands of votes.

Europe, of course, is also beset by upendings. Germany's unprecedented three-legged coalition, which had been celebrated as a triumph of the center, looks profoundly shaky, especially after disastrous European elections that saw the far-right AfD outperform all three governing parties. With state elections in the fall in three of five eastern states, where the AfD is strongest, the German political class looks queasy. In France, the story is even more dramatic. A powerful showing by the Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally in the European elections prompted that insistent centrist, Emmanuel Macron, to call a snap parliamentary election to halt the right's ascent. He miscalculated, and, after the first round, Le Pen's forces looked stronger than ever. Astonishingly, in the second round, the congeries of French parties of the left conjured a stunning turnout to capture the majority of the French parliament and bar the far right from winning control. Inversions aplenty, though the center and the imperious president are the clear losers.

Also as I write this, Ukraine has seized eighty or so towns and villages inside Russia's Kursk region, the profits of a surprise attack that broke, at least for now, a stalemate on the battlefield resembling the Western Front in World War I—frozen battle lines and slaughter by artillery. It is hard to imagine that the insult of this reversal to Vladimir Putin and his project of imperial reconstruction will not elicit another attempt at reversal.

"So momentous, so dark yet hopeful, these times have turned our world upside down," as fall 2024 Berlin Prize Fellow and Princeton historian Nell Irvin Painter writes in her essay on racial identity in this issue of the *Berlin Journal*. Against the backdrop of so much tumult, I'm pleased to say that the American Academy in Berlin, now at the beginning of its second quarter century, navigates by the same stars it always has. We are profoundly concerned about the inversions around us, and our programming reflects this. This fall, we are convening a conference to take the measure of the German *Zeitenwende* that has become the codeword for the country's effort to rebuild its military after three decades of post-Cold War neglect. This gathering will bring together participants from the policy communities of both sides of the Atlantic and be chaired by James Mattis Distinguished Visitor Mara Karlin, who just stepped down from her position as assistant secretary of defense for Strategy at the US Department of Defense. Later in the semester, we'll look more broadly at the possible trajectories of the transatlantic alliance after the November elections in our annual Holbrooke Forum, under the leadership of this year's Holbrooke Fellow, Michael Kimmage.

While we attend to this superabundance of inversion, we are—appropriately—also focusing on matters of unchanging importance, such as the values that shape our societies. Transparency is the subject of spring fellow Daniel Jütte's essay, and the long struggle for equal representation under the law for Black Americans is the topic of Jefferson Cowie's article. The connection between human dignity, the concept around which our democracies revolve, and architectural design is further explored by Peter Christensen. And, of course, the wonders of artistic creation remain for us front and center, as with Adam Shatz's piece on jazz saxophonist Pharoah Sanders and David Grubbs's meditation on artistic and musical collaboration.

This year, as every year at the Academy, we will be talking across divergent disciplines and varying experiences, as we seek to improve our scholarship, artistry, and understanding of this oddly upside-down world.

Daniel Benjamin


FOCUS

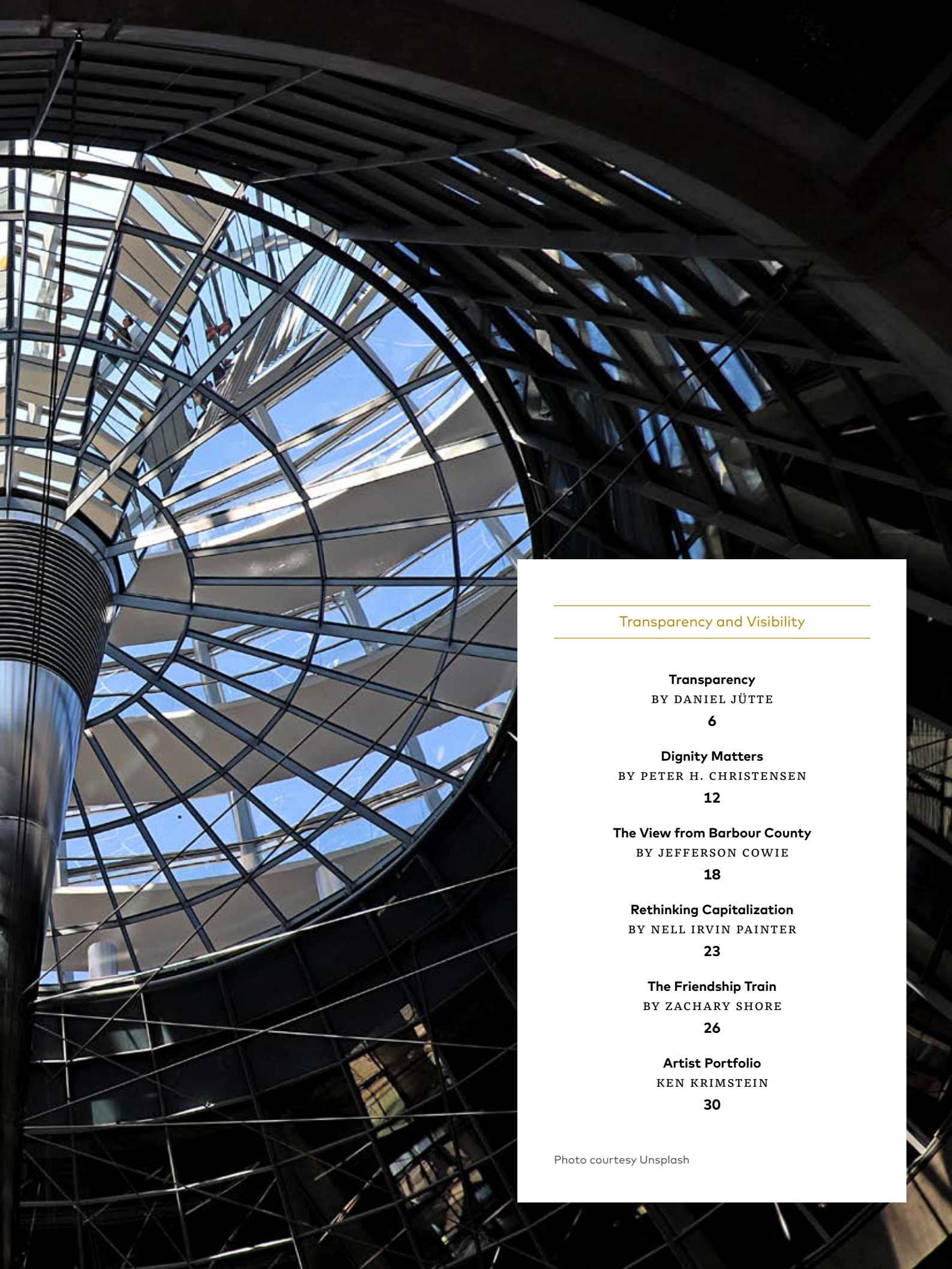

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Photo courtesy Unsplash

Plenary chamber of the German Bundestag, Bonn, 1992. Photo: Christian Kandzia. Courtesy Büro Günter Behnisch, Stuttgart.

TRANSPARENCY

A German kaleidoscope

by Daniel Jütte

TRANSPARENCY IS a mantra of our day. It is closely tied to the Western understanding of a liberal society, and it informs key areas of our lives: we expect transparency, for instance, from political institutions, corporations, and the media. But what exactly the term means is not always as transparent as the image of perfect clarity that it invokes. The vision of transparency espoused by politicians and bureaucrats, for example, can be quite incongruous with what ordinary citizens associate with the word. Similarly, the policies and products hailed by corporate leaders as "transparent" are often, in reality, rather arcane to investors and consumers. The line between liberal promise and neoliberal reality is, often enough, blurry.

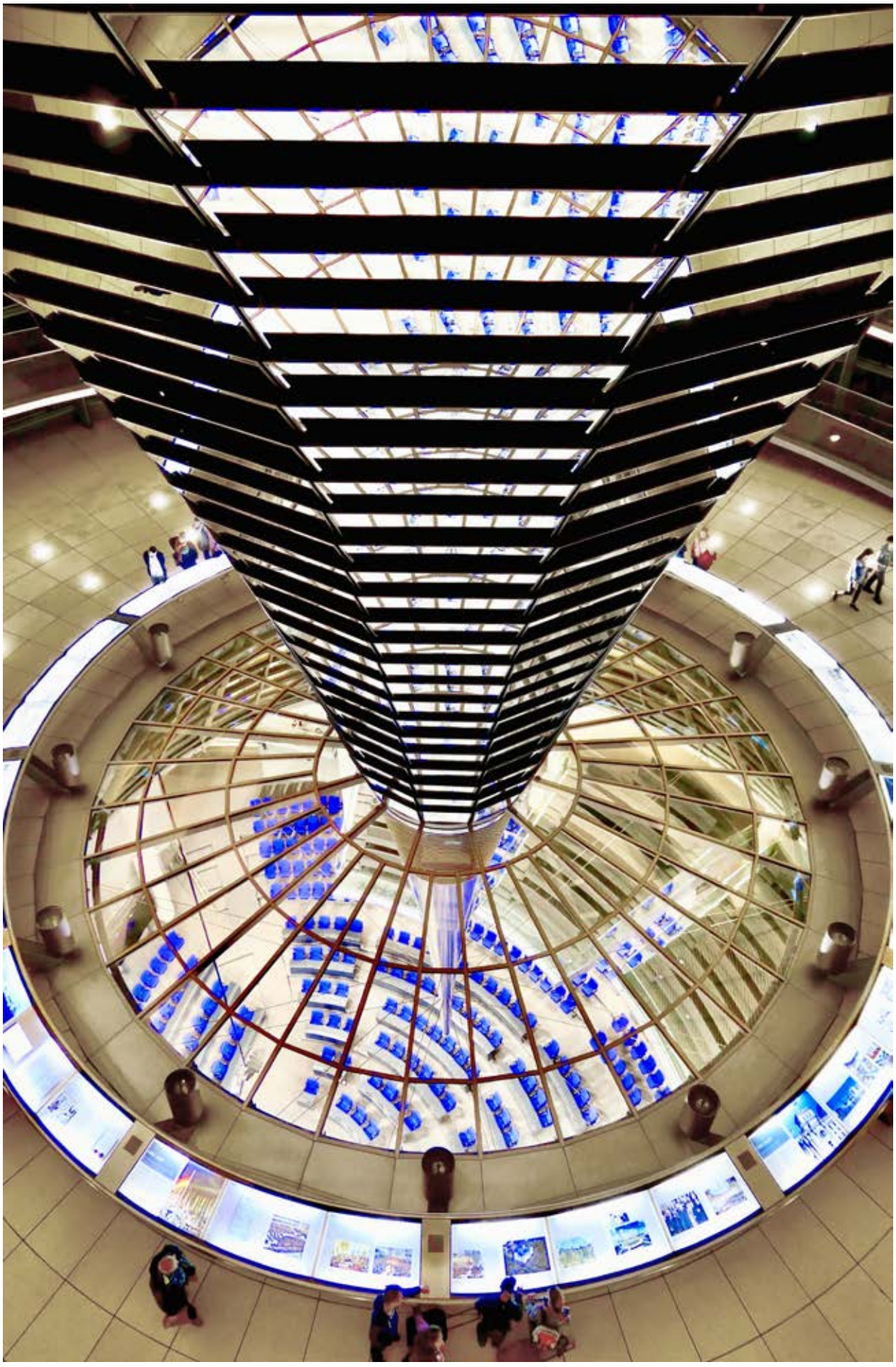
Transparency is not only a powerful metaphor, it is also a material reality. As a large-scale, mass experience, transparency is first and foremost architectural, inextricably linked to one particular element in Western architecture: glass windows. Today, of course, windows are ubiquitous, and by virtue of their transparency usually meant to be unnoticed. Who, put on the spot, could say precisely how many windows he or she has at home? It is even harder to estimate the total number of windows in a particular region or country. In Germany, one recent calculation yielded an estimate of 580 million window units.

And yet this seemingly inconspicuous element of architecture opens, as it were, a unique window onto our recent cultural and political history. Postwar culture, especially, would be hard to imagine without architectural glass. Few other materials have risen to similar prominence since 1945. The case of Germany vividly illustrates how glass—that quintessentially "clean" and modern material—assumed a key role in the rebuilding of a world in ruins. After 1945, large glass surfaces became a characteristic feature of postwar German political architecture. In domestic architecture, too, the technical sophistication of German windows has fostered a sense of national pride. When, a few years ago, Angela Merkel was asked in a newspaper interview which qualities she associates with Germany, her answer was as terse as it was telling: "I think of tight windows! No other country is able to design windows as tight and beautiful."

Merkel's answer is, of course, somewhat exaggerated. Innovation in the mid- and late-twentieth-century glass industry was hardly limited to Germany. Firms in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France made similarly important contributions. In the Federal Republic of Germany, however, glass came to play a particularly symbolic role. The political elite—as well as the architects they commissioned—considered glass an ideal material to embody West Germany's commitment to democracy. Vitreous transparency was employed to convey a political message.

In 1960, Adolf Arndt, an influential social-democratic member of parliament, declared in a lecture titled "Democracy as Architect" (*Demokratie als Bauherr*) that political architecture in a democratic state was duty-bound to render the invisible visible. Criticizing traditional façades and their "political purpose to conceal," Arndt demanded a "link between the principle of a democratic public on the one hand, and the exterior and interior transparency [*Durchsichtigkeit*] and accessibility of a democracy's public buildings on the other hand." Arndt articulated a majority view: postwar Germans espoused the architectural mantra that "transparency equals democracy," in the words of architectural historian Deborah Ascher Barnstone, who argues that political architecture in West Germany displayed an "obsession with transparency."

Some of the most prominent public buildings in Bonn, the West German capital, featured extensive glass surfaces—including the Bundestag, the federal parliament. The first Bundestag (1949), designed by Hans Schwippert, received an all-glass façade that allowed the public to observe the proceedings in the assembly. The second Bundestag, constructed by Günter Behnisch in 1992 as a more spacious successor to Schwippert's parliament building, evoked the same



Deutscher Bundestag, June 3, 2019. Photo: Massimo Virgilio. Courtesy Unsplash

architectural idiom of transparency. So did the courthouse of the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, built by Paul Baumgarten between 1965 and 1969. Baumgarten's courthouse is still in use, and the architectural design continues to inform the institution's self-understanding. The high court's website explains: "By [the building's] open structure, [Baumgarten] intended to express democratic transparency and to distinguish the building from the nineteenth-century-style palaces of justice."

This commitment to glass architecture remained strong after the 1989 German reunification—even during the government's relocation from Bonn to Berlin over the next decade. As Lutz Koepnick has observed, glass "emerged as one of the Berlin Republic's most privileged construction materials." Probably the best-known example is the Reichstag, the current seat of the German parliament. After the 1990 decision to make Berlin the capital of reunited Germany, a competition was held to solicit proposals for a radical overhaul of the nineteenth-century Reichstag building. British architect Norman Foster won the competition with his proposal to cap the Reichstag's central assembly hall with a glass cupola that would be accessible to visitors and allow them to observe the parliamentary sessions from above. As Foster noted, the idea of a glass cupola catered to the expectations of both the political establishment and the public: "For security reasons, not every part of the Reichstag can be open to the public, but we have ensured that where possible it is transparent and its activities are on view. It is a building without secrets."

Foster's Reichstag has become one of the most iconic symbols of the "Berlin Republic." It epitomizes postwar Germany's commitment to vitreous transparency as the privileged idiom of the architecture of power.

Foster's Reichstag has become one of the most iconic symbols of the "Berlin Republic." It epitomizes postwar Germany's commitment to vitreous transparency as the privileged idiom of the architecture of power. Indeed, Berlin—like Bonn in the past—is home to many other political buildings characterized by expansive glass façades. As the American critic Jane Kramer, writing in the *New Yorker* in 1999, noted about the mentality of post-reunification Germans:

> They live in a capital from which the worst of Germany's history was decreed, and now that the government is moving back to that capital they have convinced themselves that the right buildings will somehow produce the right attitudes in the people inside them. They like the transparency of the Reichstag's dome—it's the most visited place in the city now—because they think it will somehow guarantee that openness and democracy thrive in the Reichstag.

But is there really a guarantee that architectural transparency will bring about institutional transparency? Are democratic values innate to large glass surfaces? A closer look at twentieth-century history shows that there is little evidence to justify such sweeping assumptions. In fact, glass architecture was far more widely used in Fascist architecture than is commonly assumed.

Consider the case of fascist Italy, where dictator Benito Mussolini supported the generous use of glass in architecture. In this context of fascist architecture, Walter Benjamin's interwar characterization of glass as "the enemy of secrets" took on a dark, unintended dimension. Transparency came to symbolize the conflation of public and private, of individual life and collectivist mass culture. By Mussolini's own definition, fascism was a "glass house into which everyone can gaze freely." At the same time, glass architecture served as a source of nationalistic pride. In Italy, the fascist-minded Association of Glass Manufacturers praised window glass as a distinctly Italian contribution to civilization: after all, the ancient Romans, the celebrated models of Mussolini's Italo-Fascism, had first used glass in architecture.

Leading Italian avant-garde architects accepted these ideological premises. Some, in fact, helped to shape Mussolini's vision of a distinctly fascist architecture. Among them was Giuseppe Terragni, a longtime champion of glass architecture. In 1932, Terragni received the regime's commission to build Como's Casa del Fascio, a building that would serve both as the headquarters for the local Fascist Party and as a community center. Completed in 1936, the building emphasizes transparency and openness: more than fifty percent of the exterior is glazed, and the interior, too, features glass walls and floors. Terragni hoped that a generously glazed building such as the Casa del Fascio would allow for "instinctive verification" in the relation between the fascist state and its citizens. Citing the Duce, Terragni declared about the Casa: "Here is an embodiment of Mussolini's idea that fascism is a glass house in which everyone can peek." For Terragni, a "house of glass" ensured that there would be "no encumbrance, no barrier, no obstacle between the political hierarchies and the people."

In fascist Germany, too, issues of fenestration and architectural glass received considerable attention. In the public architecture of the Third Reich, oversized windows underscored the regime's will to architectural monumentality. Industrial architecture, in particular, was supposed to benefit from the generous use of glass. The mantra of rationalization, the use of uniform materials, the lack of ornament, and the idea of functional design—all of these key principles of interwar modernism proved compatible with Nazi architecture, if stripped of their original democratic impetus and put in the service of a collectivist ideology. As architectural historian Petra Eisele has observed, in the Third Reich "the agenda of the Bauhaus was rejected in terms of its philosophy, but continued on a formal level." Leading Nazi officials, such as propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, explicitly defended interwar modernist

Interior view to the west facade of the Palast der Republik, June 15, 1976. Photo: picture-alliance/ZB | Horst Sturm

architecture, commending its emphasis on clear forms and endorsing it as a legitimate source of inspiration for a new fascist architecture. Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the Hitler Youth, commissioned overtly *sachlich* architecture for his organization. In his opinion, a "youthful" German architecture was to avoid monumentalism and historicism, and instead draw on quintessentially modern materials like glass, steel, and concrete.

Albert Speer recalled that Hitler "could become enthusiastic over an industrial building in glass and steel." Such ideas aligned with the mission of the Nazi Bureau for the Beauty of Labor (*Reichsamt Schönheit der Arbeit*). The Bureau's name was, of course, a euphemism: the goal of Nazi economic policies was not to achieve "beautiful" working conditions but rather to prepare Germany for war. In an effort to improve the conditions of industrial production, the Bureau published brochures and pamphlets that encouraged companies to install large windows. What is more, one of the most iconic industrial glass buildings associated with modernism—Walter Gropius's Fagus factory, outside Hannover—was officially declared an "exemplary national-socialist workplace." Indeed, the continuities between interwar modernism and Nazi industrial architecture are manifold. As Speer admitted after the war, the Bureau freely copied Bauhaus ideas and designs.

THERE IS another dimension of German history that complicates the idea of glass as an untainted embodiment of "democratic transparency." After all, the history of postwar Germany cannot be reduced to the history of the Federal Republic. For four decades, there existed another German state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), where glass architecture also served a political function—but under the auspices of communism.

The communist government of the GDR had its own reasons for encouraging the use of glass, at least in certain genres of architecture. Invoking an argument familiar from early-twentieth-century modernist discourses, the party line deemed glass and transparency beneficial to public health. In this vein, the GDR-published booklet *The Function of the Window from the Romantic Period to the Present* (1970) ended with the emphatic claim that "socialist public housing" had leveled the differences between ostentatious bourgeois architecture and the poorly lit lower-class dwellings of the past: "Both in generic and experimental buildings, all apartments receive sufficient light through large windows. And those sites of production, where work under bad light conditions was the rule in the past, are now almost forgotten thanks to the use of the newest building techniques."

Creating better living and labor conditions for the working class was not the only objective, of course. As

in the Federal Republic, glass carried symbolic meaning in the GDR—especially in Berlin, a city in which the Cold War played out also on an architectural level. Any major building project in the divided city was considered a political statement, even if the building did not have a political purpose. A case in point is the Europa-Center, a large shopping center and office building erected in the 1960s on the Kurfürstendamm, West Berlin's central boulevard. The glass-faced complex was perceived as a temple of consumerism. In the words of historian Mary Nolan, it embodied "West Berlin's effort to adopt American modernism and lifestyles." In the eastern part of the city, communist leaders sought to counter such architectural symbolism. It is no coincidence that glass featured prominently in the political architecture of the GDR—a communist state that routinely fashioned itself as the "showcase of socialism" (*Schaufenster des Sozialismus*).

As in the West, but with a different ideological impetus, the GDR's conspicuous use of glass in certain political buildings was meant to signal political transparency. Consider the *Staatsratsgebäude*, the seat of the State Council, built by an architectural collective under the leadership of Roland Korn and Hans Erich Bogatzky (1960–64). Located in the heart of East Berlin, the building featured a generously glazed main façade, while the central staircase boasted a monumental cycle of colored windows depicting the historical development of German communism. With similar intentions, the façade of the nearby Palace of the Republic, built by an architectural collective under the direction of Heinz Graffunder (1973–76), was lined with iridescent, bronze-colored windows, which, at least from a close distance, provided views into the interior. The Palace of the Republic served as the official seat of the GDR parliament, and its glass façade suggested that the inner workings of the (rather powerless) legislature were visible to everyone. In line with this appearance of openness, the Palace also housed publicly accessible concert halls, theaters, and cafés. The impression of abundant light in the interior was augmented by hundreds of ceiling lamps, which led citizens to quip about the Palace as "Erich's lamp shop" (*Erichs Lampenladen*; referencing Erich Honecker, the GDR's leader at the time).

The Palace of the Republic—like other amply glazed public buildings in the GDR—was supposed to give an appearance of democratic accountability and good governance. In practice, however, transparency only existed in a very different sense. As we now know in disturbing detail, the interior of the Palace was under permanent surveillance by the Stasi, the GDR's feared state security service. In fact, the well-lit interior provided optimal conditions for the Stasi's omnipresent surveillance cameras and informers. It was not the inner life of the GDR's political institutions that was transparent, but rather the private life of the citizenry, which in this setting, and indeed in many others, lay exposed to the eyes of thousands of spies and informants.

The Palace of the Republic—like other amply glazed public buildings in the GDR—was supposed to give an appearance of democratic accountability and good governance.

Mass surveillance was a tactic that the Stasi had learned from its big brother, the Soviet secret service. It is no coincidence that the Stasi subscribed to the Soviet cult of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder and first director (1917–26) of the Cheka, the secret police that ultimately became the KGB. Interestingly, the invocation of vitreous imagery played an important role in this cult. For Dzerzhinsky, being true to the party line meant living a transparent life as a model Soviet citizen, without hiding any secrets from the state. Dzerzhinsky, for his part, was praised by the Soviet propaganda as a "crystally pure person." This notion of crystal-clear commitment to the communist cause was not mere rhetoric. It had tangible effects in the Soviet Union: a crystal-glass factory was named after Dzerzhinsky, and a town specializing in industrial glass production bore his name. Needless to say, none of this vitreous rhetoric translated into institutional transparency in the political system. The Soviet regime remained notoriously secretive. There was no connection—neither historically nor etymologically—between glass and *glasnost*.

In sum, the history of German vitreous architecture in the twentieth century illustrates both the promise and pitfalls of building with glass. Projects such as the new Reichstag cupola were driven by motivations deeply rooted in political symbolism, but in practice the large-scale use of glass has come with its own challenges. (Incidentally, according to German news media, rain buckets are a familiar sight in some of the glass-roofed administrative buildings that form part of the Reichstag).

In Germany and elsewhere, the history of glass in modern times is, despite considerable technological innovation, not a story of linear progress. Modern glass architecture is widely considered a quintessentially "rational architecture" (as architectural historian Annette Fierro has shown in her book *The Glass State*). But there remains a dissonance between what we expect from glass and what it can do. No amount of architectural glass will guarantee a transparent social or institutional culture, and any belief to the contrary has more to do with supernatural thinking than with a realistic assessment of what architecture can accomplish. Where transparency is desired as a communal or institutional reality, it needs to be encouraged and enacted on a social basis. Everything else is mere architectural symbolism—and the benefits of such symbolism are not at all as clear as the vitreous façades that are meant to embody it. □

DIGNITY MATTERS

How can architecture honor the lives that inhabit it?

by Peter H. Christensen

IN IMMANUEL KANT'S widely cited collection of essays on morality, *Lectures on Ethics*, transcribed by his students between 1775–80, he issues an aphorism on the nature of human dignity: "Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself, and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being to use him as a mere means for some external purpose." Kant was advancing a growing body of Western philosophy on human rights, moving one step beyond the material rights of air, food, water, and shelter to say that every human being not only has the innate right to live, but also the right to live a life free from instrumentalization towards an end. In other words, every life has intrinsic value.

This Enlightenment sentiment began to gain global currency throughout the eighteenth century, paving the way for reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth. Indeed, before the modern period, "dignity" was a word utilized to connote the state of being worthy of honor and respect; it was largely conceived as a quality either hereditary or earned. Kantian dignity upended this anti-universalist conception and put forth the tenet that, in theory, all human life—irrespective of class, achievement, race, or gender—deserves dignity. This intellectual lineage may explain why our thinking about dignity over the last two centuries has been primarily philosophical, not material, in nature.

By the twentieth century, in fact, dignity became so widely entrenched in humanist philosophy that it transfigured into a legal concept in the constitutions of modern nation-states and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But this legal enshrinement patently did not translate into the preservation of human dignity on the ground. World wars, everyday hatred, and xenophobia stripped

View of Rural Studio's Glass Chapel, Mason's Bend, Alabama, from inside, 2023. Photo by the author.

View of New Gourna from inside an extant domicile, 2023. Photo by the author.

millions of their dignity when it did not strip them of their lives. Moreover, poverty—the most pernicious dissolver of dignity—may have decreased, but overall inequality has ballooned, manifesting its own egregious indignities. Today, the world faces new challenges to the preservation of human dignity, perhaps most loomingly the specter of a climate catastrophe that threatens our ability to ensure dignity over generations.

Consequent the myriad climate crisis catastrophes that we and our built world now face, it has become clear that the Global North must curb its material consumption. It is an injustice that the carbon emissions unleashed on the world by the industrial Global North are the same emissions that will most radically alter the lives of those in the Global South. Climate change and the migrations and demographic changes it has set into motion make it clear that radical alterations to our material world are urgently needed; this is where dignity comes into the picture.

Dignity is a threshold concept, the most emancipatory tool we have at our disposal for understanding how to balance the fallout of climate change while maintaining a commitment to inherent human worth. The climate crisis and the anthropocentric changes it demands raise the specter of a future world full of architectural sacrifices: of creature comforts like climate-controlled spaces, the spaciousness of our homes, the further densification of our towns and cities, and more. After all, the building sector has accounted for 40 percent of global carbon emissions. As we develop new ways of living, how can the concept of dignity guide us to lifeways that demonstrate both the value of a human life and the value of our environment?

Two architectural projects tethered to the rhetoric of dignity illuminate the ways in which history informs our understanding of this threshold condition for architecture. The first is in New Gourna, in Upper Egypt; the second the projects of Rural Studio, in Hale County, Alabama.

Any discussion of utopianism in the twentieth century necessarily involves mass housing. Any discussion of mass housing is, in some measure, informed by a theory of dignity, whether or not the architect realizes it. The village of New Gourna was a settlement commissioned by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in 1945. The goal was to relocate the residents of Old Gourna, a longstanding improvised settlement, so as to repristinate the Pharaonic sites adjacent to it, including Hatshepsut's Temple, the Valley of the Queens, and Valley of the Kings, among others. In so doing, the sites would become primed for more tourism. Depending on what one reads, the residents of Old Gourna are alternately identified as looters or "amateur archaeologists." Since at least the nineteenth century the settlement had been home to antiquities traders who made a living digging in the numerous valley tombs for treasures, most of which reached international buyers looking to develop Egyptological collections in the West.

The architect of New Gourna was Hassan Fathy, born and trained in Egypt, who was tasked with not only constructing new homes for the residents of Old Gourna but also with redesigning the entire social and economic infrastructure of their livelihood. In his plan, Fathy sought to retool the careers of Old Gourna's residents from "amateur archaeologists" to craftsmen who would make tourist handicrafts, trinkets, and souvenirs out of alabaster, onyx, basalt, and other local stones. New Gourna contained workshops for these activities as well as a market from which to sell them. The settlement also included communal structures Fathy saw as necessary for a village of several hundred: a mosque, a school, even an open-air theater. But political and financial complications as well as residents' opposition to relocation prevented completion. Today, only about 30 percent of what was completed of the original village remains.

New Gourna's architecture consisted of modest, user-built mud-brick structures, chosen for their simplicity and affordability, which could be constructed with local materials. Fathy's designs pulled from a variety of historical Egyptian sources, most prominently Coptic and Nubian architecture, resulting in his own vernacular style. Yet despite its originality, the design of Gourna was a massive failure: Fathy, for instance, made courtyards an essential part of the residences, even though courtyards were rare in Upper Egypt. When they were present, they served as work areas, not a spaces for leisure Fathy intended.

The most rudimentary secondary literature on Fathy naively paints him as a benevolent utopian seeking to better the lives of his countrymen. More sophisticated analyses, and his own archive, paint a more complex picture: that of an architect intent on improving the lives of the poor through good architecture, but also of a man with a deep-seated suspicion of the rural poor who, in his mind, lacked dignity through a combination of their living conditions—something they largely could not control because of their indigence—and something they largely could control, which Fathy describes as their "peasantly insolence."

Fathy left behind an extensive written record, including his book on New Gourna, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*, first published in 1969 as *Gourna: A Tale of Two Villages* by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. His archives at the American University of Cairo reveal even more discussion of dignity in his letters, manuscript drafts, and in his own collection of literature. One of the key measures of dignity was the destandardization of mass housing. Fathy writes in *Architecture for the Poor* (1973), "How can people so poor that they cannot even afford to buy ready-baked bread, but have to make their own to save the baker's profit, even dream of a factory-made house? To talk

In his plan, Fathy sought to retool the careers of Old Gourna's residents from "amateur archaeologists" to craftsmen who would make tourist handicrafts, trinkets, and souvenirs out of alabaster, onyx, basalt, and other local stones.

of prefabrication to people living in such poverty is worse than stupid, it is a cruel mockery of their condition. . . . We cannot house them cheaply even when we do standardize, and we cannot house them with any semblance of human dignity unless we destandardize."

If destandardization was one pillar of dignity for Fathy, another was the environmental quality of the home, and a third was the activation of a kind of autodidacticism in his clients. Most tellingly, Fathy describes New Gourna holistically not as an "end in itself" but rather as a heuristic for a better architecture writ large. This description of New Gourna as non-instrumental is precisely the kind of language that defines Kant's conception of dignity. Fathy's articulation is effectively a transposition of human dignity onto architecture. When imbued with dignity, architecture and human beings retain intrinsic, spiritual value.

However inventive and beautiful, we cannot ignore the failure of New Gourna to deliver on Fathy's tall ambitions to alleviate poverty and retrain the amateur archaeologists of Luxor. The residents, by and large, did not become as enamored with New Gourna as critical regionalists and architecture critics did. Residents were unwilling or unable to participate in labor-intensive investment needed for the upkeep of mud-brick structures; one could argue that this mandate of perpetual labor was itself an indignity. And they were generally loath to jump in wholesale to the more "dignified" business of souvenir makers rather than that of "tomb raiders."

At the root of this schism, I suspect, is a peculiar collision of values where, on the one hand, the state wishes to make honest men of tomb raiders and, on the other, the tomb raiders had been part of a lineage of generations of tradespeople with a certain measure of pride that conflicts directly with Western and museological morality. Their work, however problematic, was the only livelihood they

knew. It would not surprise me if their reluctance to be domesticated into "dignified" citizens was, in a sense, also an opposition to the profound assault on their dignity. If architecture was the primary, and to some degree only, tool for this domestication, it makes sense that the would-be residents of New Gourna were indignant.

RURAL STUDIO IS a satellite campus of Auburn University's School of Architecture. It is located in Newbern, Alabama, in Hale County, one of the poorest counties in the United States and at the heart of the so-called Black Belt in the American South. The term "Black Belt" originally referred to the region's rich, black soil. The term took on additional meaning in the nineteenth century, when the region was developed for cotton plantation agriculture executed by enslaved African Americans. After the American Civil War, many freedmen stayed in the area as sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

Founded in 1992 by the late Samuel Mockbee, a white Mississippi native, Rural Studio is a design-build program that, as part of its educational experience, immerses students in the design and construction of innovative, low-cost buildings for communities. And while their objectives share many similarities, Fathy seemed to revel in the role of the architect, while Mockbee regularly demonstrated scorn for the profession's entrenchment and bent towards theory: he described American architects as "house pets for the rich" and was known to regularly quip "screw theory" whenever he was privy to a conversation that ventured into conceptual territory. But what Mockbee was really denouncing were the discursive and exegetic traditions of the profession. While he was not the prolific writer that Fathy was (he was, in fact, more of an artist), Mockbee did manifest a robust and recognizable theoretical domain of his own. "Everyone rich or poor deserves a shelter for the soul," he said, evincing what is clearly an articulation of a universal idea of dignity.

Eschewing ambition or careerism, Mockbee noted that "compassion is more eventful than passion," another clear indictment of what he perceived to be the architecture profession's ambivalence towards socially driven architecture. He manifested this philosophy with a sort of kit of parts or vernacular assemblage, drawing inspiration from "overhanging galvanized roofs, rusting metal trailers, dogtrot forms, and porches." The term "citizen architect"—lying somewhere between design and civic duty—was also credited to Mockbee and remains the proud moniker of Rural Studio.

Since's Mockbee's death, in 2001, Rural Studio has been directed by the English architect Andrew Freear, whom I visited in February 2024, along with more than twenty rural studio projects in Alabama. The visit afforded me the opportunity to ask the architect directly about what role dignity plays in his work. He told me that while dignity plays a central role, his understanding of the term is neither "academic" nor fixed. Freear has had to address certain criticisms of the studio that Mockbee did not in its early years. Foremost among them is the exploitation of power relations inherent in gift-giving and, as architecture critic Patricio del Real wrote in a 2009 *Journal of Architectural Education* article, for "making elitist architectural and middle-class values, rather than the process of political emancipation and self-determination, a way to improve the lives of the poor." Another criticism is the racial dynamics of a predominantly white corps of students building for near exclusively Black clients.

To counter these critiques Freear deploys his "intuitive" idea of dignity, a quality he believes is not afforded by a process that privileges recycling and cost-cutting. Though he seeks to train his students to work with manageable, off-the-shelf products, he does so without obsessing over price; doing so likens valuing people to valuing materials. Sublimating the tacit economics of the Studio is thus a means to focus on what Freear believes is the true measure of dignity: a refined and unique spatial creation that lifts the client's spirit and empowers them to live with self-respect and a sense of ownership and dominion.

Freear also sees maintenance as a measure of dignity. Student builders are not specialist contractors, he admits, so some of their work needs remediation a few years later. In addition to new builds, a major component of the Studio's work is doing such maintenance work on a growing list of structures, some of them now thirty years old. This is the reason Rural Studio does not build beyond a twenty-mile radius.

To date, Rural Studio has completed over one hundred houses and civic projects across three adjacent counties. Under Freear, they have also become more focused on prototypes, such as one deemed the $20K House. Because of the lack of conventional credit for people in the area, mobile homes are the main path to home ownership. Unlike a house, however, which is an asset for its owner, mobile homes depreciate over time. The $20K House, with its varied spatial permutations, is intended to model a home that could be reproduced at scale and with a measure of customization and hence position itself as a viable alternative to the mobile home. Since 2005, there have been 16 iterations of the house, but none have yet to reach a scale justifying mass production.

WHAT DO THESE three architects teach us? For one, Fathy, Mockbee, and Freear assert the worthiness of dignity by articulating its moral obligations and supporting the indigent in word and deed. What do the places they built tell us about the nature of architectural dignity? I'm still working on the answer to this question, but I do know this: No matter how we must modify our lives, buildings, and cities for the future, human dignity must remain a primary goal of architecture. Dignity in living, and the resources it requires, are not at odds with a just climate future. History is resplendent with the potential to point to the ways in which governments, if they are constitutionally committed to human dignity, must themselves incentivize the growth of renewable systems and the regulations to protect their inhabitants. □

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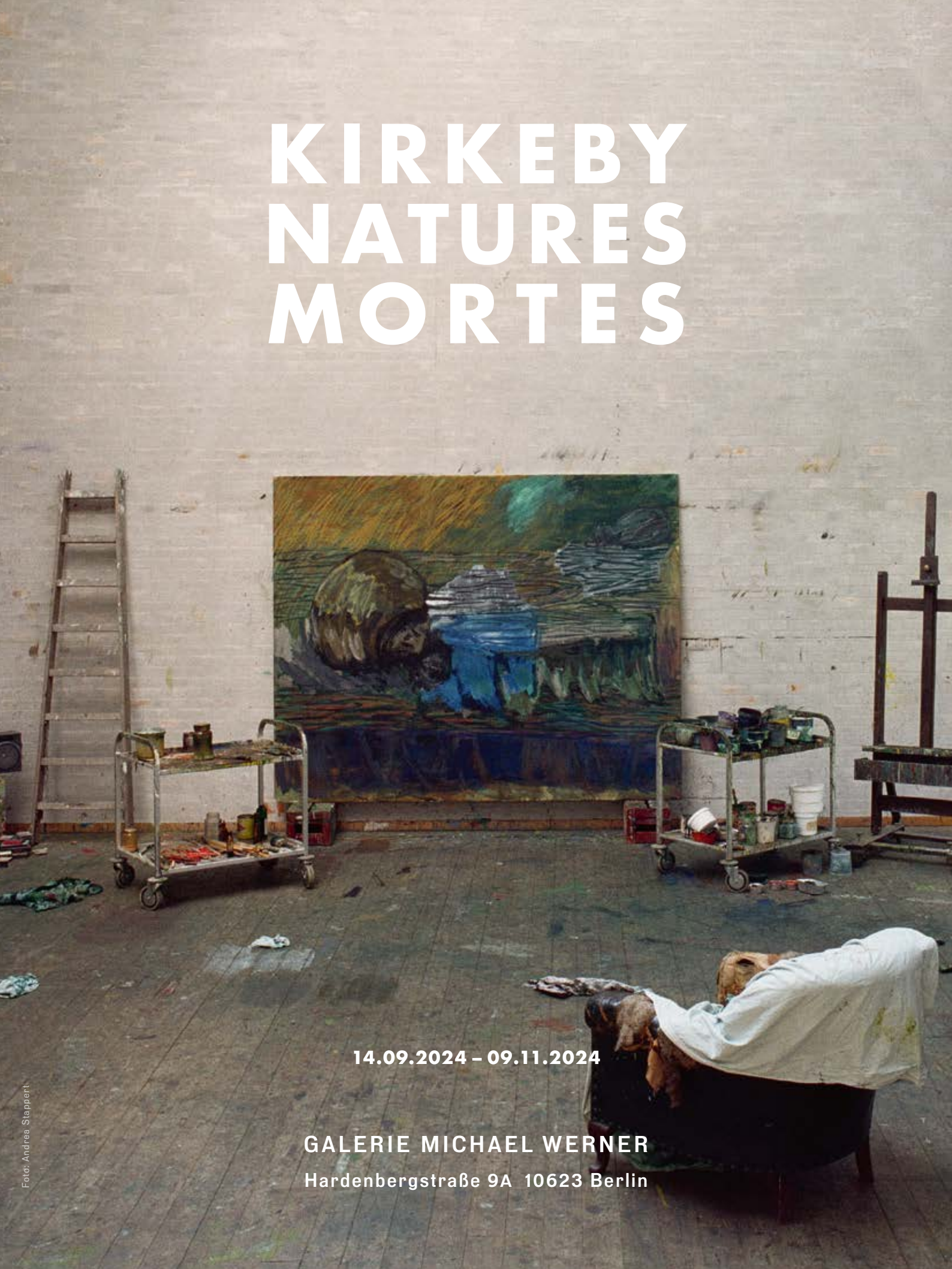

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THE VIEW FROM BARBOUR COUNTY

White freedom, federal power, and the Black vote

by Jefferson Cowie

President Lyndon B. Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr., Clarence Mitchell, and Patricia Roberts Harris, following the signing of the Voting Rights Act, August 6, 1965. President's Room, US Capitol, Washington, DC. Photo Yoichi Okamoto. Courtesy LBJ Library

"SEGREGATION NOW,

SEGREGATION TOMORROW, SEGREGATION FOREVER!" Alabama Governor George Wallace's most famous sentence echoes through history, a defining moment in the resistance to civil rights. Yet segregation was not the essence of his 1963 inaugural address. Rather, Wallace defended a more enduring logic on which segregation rested: freedom. Specifically, white freedom from federal power.

In Wallace's world, federal authority to protect civil rights became the looming usurper, the illegitimate actor, the violator of American freedom. In his inaugural address, he mentioned segregation just one other time after his notorious demand for "segregation forever." In contrast, he invoked freedom or liberty 25 times. Pointing to the threat of "federal bayonets" on the horizon, he warned, "The heel of tyranny does not fit the neck of an upright man."

In an era of Black enfranchisement and civil rights, Governor Wallace spoke passionately of an enduring freedom from federal authority, a freedom that allowed for the domination of others, a freedom that claims if you cannot be a master then you are not free, a freedom that says if the government is not on your side, then it should not exist. The Civil Rights Act, he depicted as an "assassin's knife stuck in the back of liberty," an assertion of government overreach with "more power than claimed by King George III, more power than Hitler, Mussolini, or Khrushchev ever had." By promoting national laws to end racial segregation, the "federal force-cult," Wallace claimed, was trying to push the white South "back into bondage."

THE GOVERNOR HAILED from Barbour County, an obscure corner of Alabama known for towns with streets lined with elaborate antebellum style mansions, and a countryside dotted with sharecropper shacks. On the day that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was going to be signed into law, the Black people of Barbour prepared for another of their marches. Where Wallace supporters saw white bondage in federal power, Black marchers in Barbour County saw freedom.

White people wanted their citizenship defined locally, free from what they saw as federal tyranny. Black people wanted to assert federal citizenship, which they could leverage against local power and exploitation.

On that soggy, hot day, the air as wet as the rain, the marchers in favor of the Voting Rights Act knew that nobody in the nation's capital would hear their hopeful chants and songs ringing out from this obscure dot in the deep South, but the people sang and chanted anyway. As they marched in anticipation of the impending presidential signature, the parade ended with cascades of rain dropping from the sky. "Everyone was soaked to the skin," civil rights worker Larry Butler recalled, "but on the way back you could hear the freedom songs for three blocks." Then the sun burst through, and steam rose from the streets. "The sight of lines of now sunlit marchers dancing to the rhythm of freedom songs in wet clothes glued to swaying bodies," he noted, "is one that cannot fail to strike a chord in the most ironclad throat."

When word came that President Lyndon Baines Johnson had signed the bill, the raucous gathering turned solemn. Everyone stopped, drew quiet, and directed their prayers toward far away Washington. As a result of the struggles of Black people throughout the South, the world's oldest democracy had finally committed itself to becoming an actual democracy—even in distant places like Barbour County.

AS THOSE MARCHERS knew, at nearly every juncture in the long history of the African American freedom struggle, in places famous and obscure, the project was to create *federal citizens* as much as possible. People needed to

be released from the vicious traps of local- and state-level citizenship. The federal government may often be a treacherous ally on civil and voting rights, but it is also the single most important instrument for guaranteeing a fighting chance for all people.

The Voting Rights Act appeared to have rescued people from the terror of the local. Before the Act, civil rights workers in rural Barbour County managed to register 611 people to vote after months and years of toil. On the first "registration day" protected by the Act, organizers were stunned to see an estimated five hundred people lined up to register at each of the two major courthouses in the county.

Everything about voting rights hinged on federal authority. The Barbour County story, and thousands of other unnamed, unknown, unfilmed places where dirt-level fights for political survival took place, nothing short of an unflinching commitment to federal enforcement of voting rights proved adequate to sustaining the promise of American democracy.

A FEW MONTHS after the passage of the Act, however, adding machines at civil rights headquarters in Atlanta spit out a mystery: Hosea Williams, Martin Luther King Jr.'s key lieutenant, pored over the numbers to figure out why some voter registration drives worked out so much better than others. No matter how important the Voting Rights Act was, no matter how good the county level organizing was, no matter who the leaders were, no matter what tactics were used, Williams found exactly one variable that explained the disparate rates of registration on the county level: the presence or absence of federal registrars, sponsored by the Voting Rights Act, that were on the ground in any given county.

By November 1965, Black Belt counties with federal registrars reported 84 percent of the "Negro Voting Age Population" registered. The figure for counties without federal oversight was less than half that—41 percent. Federal presence in a county, Williams concluded, was the "only significant variable we can consider responsible" for the different registration outcomes. The report singled out a comparison between a notoriously rough place like Wilcox County, where there was federal oversight, and Barbour County, where there was none. "Barbour County, the home of Governor George Wallace and one of the best movement counties in the Black Belt, has a voting age population roughly similar to that of Wilcox County," the report concluded, "yet the registration in Barbour since the VRA is only a little more than one-third of that in Wilcox County."

Laws mattered, but federal enforcement made the difference. For want of federal registrars, the frustrating and often violent struggle to get people registered continued. Without aggressive enforcement of citizenship rights, even the Voting Rights Act combined with a vibrant social movement was not going to get the job done. Hosea Williams, after tabulating those county-level results, summed up the history of the United States. "In short states' rights and civil rights (human rights) don't mix."

Both Hosea Williams and George Wallace struggled for their respective ideas of freedom in what founding father James Madison celebrated as the "compound republic." A productive tension, Madison believed, was built into the American system in which local, state, and federal arenas form a conflicted political whole. Yet when it came to the right to vote, Madison's symphony of political interests ends up being an ongoing political, at times actual, war over the right to vote. Since there is *no guarantee of the right to vote in the United States Constitution*, whites have tried to preserve control over voting rights by keeping it on the state and local level.

Such racialized versions of anti-statism sustained George Wallace through his decades of governorship and his two major presidential campaigns. And the truly stunning thing is that Wallace was not wrong. Resistance to federal power has very much been an enduring catalyst in the political chemistry of American freedom. It was not a reflexive rhetorical dodge, but a constituent dimension of the American creed. His contemporary "fight to win and preserve our freedoms and liberties" was as old as the republic itself.

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, when the federal government used unprecedented force to ensure Black voting rights, whites in Barbour County attacked their occupiers as "a flagrant and dangerous invasion of the ancient conservative principles of personal liberty and free government." As it so often did, "free government" meant white rule.

Had federal power been wielded firmly and justly after the Civil War, in fact, the Voting Rights Act might never have been necessary. For all the importance of the Reconstruction Amendments—the 13th (emancipation), 14th (equal protection), and the 15th (non-discrimination in voting rights)—they were only as good as the federal enforcement that stood behind them.

Reconstruction started well in Barbour County. With a slim Black majority population, the county elected several African American state legislators, had Black people on juries, and even sent a Black Congressman, James T. Rapier, to Washington. During this short-lived burst of genuine democracy supported by military occupation, white people roiled under what they called "Negro Republican domination," and they organized themselves, not in protest groups parading around town squares, but in armed militias and Klan chapters.

During the November 1874 elections, hundreds of organized Black voters from the countryside marched into Barbour County's largest town of Eufaula in rank-and-file formation, disciplined and strong but strategically unarmed, so as not to provoke a violent backlash. At noon, a single pistol shot cracked the air. The town's "best" citizens quickly appeared, armed and ready. All opened fire on Black people in line to vote. Shots came from both sides of the street, out windows, and from porches. Bullets, one survivor recalled, rained down "like hail from the clouds."

"In a twinkling of an eye," recalled a Black Republican organizer named Henry Fraser, "the street was foggy with powder-smoke." Bullets whizzed overhead, and glass shattered as indiscriminate firing hit storefront windows. Fraser hid under some nearby steps and witnessed how "the colored people all broke and ran" in every direction. Some were shot from the upper part of the city, and some from the lower part," he remembered. Shooters followed Black voters "as long as they had anything to fire with."

As the smoke cleared, eighty wounded and dead Black voters lay in the streets around the polls. Corpses were taken away in carts. They eventually found the body of one missing person by following the circling buzzards to where he had fled, bleeding to death, into the woods.

THE BLACK VOTERS THOUGHT THEY HAD THE PROTECTION OF FEDERAL TROOPS AND FEDERAL MARSHALS, BOTH OF WHOM WERE IN THE COUNTY TO OVERSEE THE ELECTION.

Local whites blamed the riot on unruly and violent Black people. But when Congressional investigators later asked US Marshal James D. Williford about what he witnessed at the Eufaula election "riot," he responded, "My opinion of that Eufaula riot is that it was simply a massacre."

Everyone knew that election day 1874 hinged on what the federal troops would do. The Black voters thought they had the protection of federal troops and federal marshals, both of whom were in the county to oversee the election. Unknown to the Black voters, however, regional Army headquarters had given orders to stand down in any local disputes. As the shooting began, one federal marshal begged the commanding Army officer to stop the bloodshed, but he refused based on orders not to intervene. The body count mounted while federal soldiers stood by.

Twenty miles away, in the northern part of Barbour County, a white mob shot up a polling place and burned a ballot box full of votes cast by Black citizens. They tried to kill a prominent white Republican judge, a "scalawag" as those sympathetic to Black voters were known, but they killed his teenage son instead. Here, too, the commanding officer of the United States Army watched the destruction, clutching a telegram that said, "Keep your troops away from crowd."

The end of federal enforcement meant the end of democracy in Barbour County. The murderous violence in 1874 ended substantive Black voting there until the 1960s. Whites called it

"redemption." In the vacuum left by federal retreat rose the neo-slavery of convict leasing, the vigilante justice of lynching, the degradation and debt of sharecropping, and the official disenfranchisement of blacks under a new state constitution. Most activists—including the surviving scalawag judge, fled the county, and Black Republicans who so much as talked of testifying about the election massacres were sent to jail. "Not one escaped a conviction," a judge explained, "no matter whether the evidence showed a violation of law or not."

In places like Barbour County, long shaped by the politics of white supremacy, the drive to escape the "oppression" of federal power inevitably led to Black disenfranchisement. The contemporary historian of Reconstruction, Gregory P. Downs, put the answer to the problem succinctly in his *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War*. "A government without force," he writes "means a people without rights."

TODAY THE PATTERN of local–federal tension seen during the Reconstruction and Civil Rights Eras continues. While Black Lives Matter and other hopeful movements of our time might suggest a third era of "reconstruction," so far the story looks more like another slow moving "redemption" since the Voting Rights Act. Gerrymandering, hundreds of pending and successful state voter restriction bills, crackpot ideas like the "independent state legislature" theory, and a Supreme Court poised to roll back voting rights, all fall under the same states' rights brand of freedom that ended Reconstruction, flummoxed Hosea Williams, and made George Wallace's career.

As *Bush v. Gore* (2000) reminds us, there is no affirmative right to vote on the federal level, only a theoretical protection from discrimination in whatever voting systems states may have set up. This leaves a never ending political war over the right to vote, in which the struggle over *who* gets to vote supersedes *what* political concerns people would like to express. When *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) severely rolled back the federal oversight provisions of the Voting Rights Act, Chief Justice John Roberts supported on the idea that "the country has changed." Yet the change has been away from federal support of voting, not towards it.

> THE TRUTH MIGHT SET US FREE: IF THE RIGHT TO VOTE IS NOT IN THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, AND IT IS NOT IN THE STATE CONSTITUTION, WHERE IS IT?

Even when the current conservative Supreme Court tried to end discriminatory "cracking and packing" pattern of gerrymandering that corralled Black representation into a single district in Alabama (in the 2023 decision *Allen v. Milligan*), the Republican legislature maintained the state's historic resistance to federal authority by simply defying the Court's decision. The Supreme Court had to return with a court-ordered special master to draw the second Black district, which, after an exhausting struggle, finally placed Barbour County in a redrawn district with enhanced Black voting power.

Voting rights cases have continued to bear particularly odd fruit as of late. In a fight similar to Alabama's, South Carolina found the ultimate work-around in 2024. The State argued that their redistricting plan was not a race-based gerrymander, but a partisan one, and the Supreme Court agreed. In other words, gerrymandering by party affiliation is just good old American politics—an elegant if pernicious sidestepping of the racial justice provisions of the Voting Rights Act. Most recently, the Kansas Supreme Court may have done the country a big favor by rattling the shaky foundations of the house of democracy to its core. It concluded, in a split decision, that there is no guarantee of the right to vote in the Kansas state constitution. The truth might set us free: if the right to vote is not in the federal constitution, and it is not in the state constitution, where is it?

The only option is to establish the right to vote on the federal level in clear and affirmative ways. The noble efforts of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and the For the People Act are extremely important but will maintain the feeble system that promotes voting rights as a question of state-versus-federal power, making voting rights a political tactic rather than a right. Demanding vigorous federal enforcement is good, but better yet would be a constitutional guaranteeing of an unambiguous right to vote for every citizen —full stop.

Yet American freedom, especially its white version, has too often been constructed as autonomy from that much-needed federal power. The legitimacy of federal authority found its most sustained challenge on January 6, 2021. That day, Alabama Congressman Mo Brooks rallied the right-wing shock troops to defy the duly elected federal government. Wrapped in body armor, he claimed it was time to be "taking down names and kicking ass" in his efforts to promote the Big Lie about the 2020 election. When it came to defending his inflammatory remarks about the illegitimacy of the fairly elected president—and federal authority more broadly—Brooks explained that everyone should read his speech and decide what kind of republic they want: "One based on freedom and liberty or one based on Godless dictatorial power."

If the forces of democracy do not seize federal authority to enforce equitable voting rights, authoritarians, as they have before, will seize those same levers of power to enforce a narrow and militant brand of white freedom. Lest another 150 years go by with this issue still a central problem in American politics, the struggle for voting rights is urgent and imperative—despite maudlin cries of "Godless dictatorial power." □

Parts of this essay were excerpted from *Freedom's Dominion: A Saga of White Resistance to Federal Power* (Basic Books, 2022), which received the Pulitzer Prize in History in 2023.

RETHINKING CAPITALIZATION

The ups and downs of racial identity

by Nell Irvin Painter

So momentous, so dark yet hopeful, these times have turned our world upside down.

Police brutality brought into the light. Masses in the streets confronting American history, toppling the Confederacy after years—decades—of well-mannered but vain protest. We are left to grapple with the conventions of American public life.

Restructuring policing in ways that matter will take months, years—and many more Confederate monuments remain standing than have come down. But one change has been implemented quickly: translating this social upheaval into print has suddenly and all but unanimously restored a capital "B" to "Black." I say "restored," because that capital "B" appeared in the 1970s. I used it myself. Then copyeditors, uncomfortable with both the odd combination of uppercase "Black" and lowercase "white" and the unfamiliar, bumpy "Black and White," took off both capital letters. In one of many turns in the history of racial capitalization, "Black" returned to "black." There's a history to issues of capitalization.

"Spell It with a Capital," exhorted the *Chicago Conservator* in 1878. This pioneering Black weekly newspaper was founded by Ferdinand Lee Barnett, the husband of the crusading anti-lynching journalist Ida B. Wells. For the *Conservator*, as for journalists in the succeeding half century, the letter in question was "N," for "Negro," the then progressive name for Americans of African descent. As part of an extensive letter-writing campaign, W.E.B. Du Bois asked the *New York Times* in 1926 to capitalize "Negro" because the lower-case "N" inflicted "a personal insult." The *Times* refused, although the *New Republic* had agreed years earlier. By 1930, all Black and several important White newspapers, including the *New York World, New York Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune*, and *New York Times*, had adopted the capital "N." Capital-N "Negro" was standard usage by the 1950s.

In the 1960s, "Black," formerly considered derogatory, gained acceptance as a sign of race pride, thanks to Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and Black Power coming out of the Civil Rights movement. In the 1970s, capital "B Black" emerged in Black writing, sometimes but not always along with a corresponding capital "W White." In 1988, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, presidential candidate, changed names once again, deeming "African American" to be the correct terminology. The new phrase was accepted, with both adjectives in its phrasing conveniently capitalized. African American—at first with a hyphen, then without—went well with Asian American, Native American, and Hispanic, then Latino and Latinx, all capitalized.

Are people from Algeria, Iraq, and South Asia bBrown? "Brown" presents an exaggerated case of the universal imprecision of racial terminology.

By the early twenty-first century, "African American" was no longer working so smoothly, as African immigrants and their children became a sort of African African Americans. Black returned as a more inclusive term with the added attraction of roots in Black Power and James Brown's "Black + proud."

In the wake of massive George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests, Black people and their allies now regard capitalizing "Black" as a badge of honor. By mid-June 2020, prominent newspapers and journalists' associations were embracing the capital "B." Even Fox News has joined the crowd. The most common motive for change was summed up as *respect*. As I started thinking about racial capitalization, I asked my multiracial, multiethnic Facebook friends for their views. They variously mentioned cultural identity, pride, and a shared "ethnicity," meaning Black American ethnicity, skipping over the various cultural backgrounds of Black people from around the Western Hemisphere and beyond. The case for capitalizing "Black" seemed obvious, whether as an ethnicity (a minority view) or a racial designation.

What about "wWhite"? Perhaps the lowercase "w" for "White" mainly signals an unwillingness to poke the fiery hornet's nest of White nationalism.

Which raises the question of capitalization for the other two currently recognized racial groups: "bBrown" and "wWhite."

I sense little sentiment for capitalizing "bBrown." As a demographic category, bBrown is scattered geographically, ethnically, and taxonomically. The US census considers Hispanics/Latinos an ethnicity rather than a racial group, pointing once again to the unwieldiness of trying to enumerate people according to concepts lacking clear boundaries like congressional districts, household wealth, or life expectancy. Do people from Latin America—Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador—go together in one category? Are people from Algeria, Iraq, and South Asia bBrown? "Brown" presents an exaggerated case of the universal imprecision of racial terminology. The Hispanic/Latino category, whose roots lie in the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, lacks the historical and emotional depth of Black, the subject of exhausting attention for some three hundred plus years. For now, the media seem to have settled on lower-case "b" for "brown."

So what about "wWhite"? Perhaps the lowercase "w" for "White" mainly signals an unwillingness to poke the fiery hornet's nest of the White nationalism of people like the Charleston church assassin, who capitalized "White." Besides, says the *New York Times*, White "doesn't represent a shared culture and history in the way Black does." The *Washington Post* continues to deliberate racial capitalization.

When I compare the cultural, intellectual, and historical heft of the three categories, Black comes out well ahead of the other two. We have whole libraries of books and articles about Blackness, world-beating traditions of Black music and literature, even entire academic departments thirty to fifty years old specializing in African American/Black studies. Compared to Blackness, Whiteness and brownness are severely under-theorized. Facebook Friends' lower casing of "white" and "brown" seems to prevail, at least for now. For a while, I inclined toward the new formula: capital "B" for "Black"; lowercase "w" for "white"; lowercase "b" for "brown," but with serious reservations.

The National Association of Black Journalists prompted my first reservation. Its June 11, 2020, statement on racial capitalization says, "NABJ also recommends that whenever a color is used to appropriately describe race then it should be capitalized, including White and Brown." This recommendation from the leading organization representing Black journalists gave me pause.

A second reservation arose as I considered the asymmetry of racial identities of Blackness and Whiteness that function differently in American history and culture. These two identities don't simply mirror one another, for one works through a very pronounced group identity; the other more often is lived as unraced individuality. However much you may see yourself as an individual, if you're Black, you also have to contend with other people's views. This is what Du Bois summed up as "twoness," as seeing yourself as yourself but also knowing that other people see you as a Black person. You don't have to be a Black nationalist to see yourself as Black. Until quite recently, however, White Americans rarely saw themselves as raced, as White.

The people who have embraced White as a racial identity have been White nationalists, Ku Klux Klansmen, and their ilk. Thanks to President Trump, White nationalists are more visible than ever in our public spaces. Yet they fail to determine how masses of White people see themselves. In terms of racial identity, White Americans have had the choice of being either something vague—the paltry leavings of Blackness—or as Klansmen, which few have embraced. Those of my Facebook friends who said White should be capitalized were challenging the freedom to consider oneself as an unraced individual rather than subscribing to the preferences of White nationalists. "White" should be capitalized in order to unmask Whiteness as an American racial identity as historically important as Blackness. No longer should White people be allowed the comfort of racial invisibility; they should have to see themselves as raced. These Facebook friends said being racialized makes White people squirm, so, yes, racialize them with a capital "W." Make them squirm.

The good that might come from seeing White people squirm aside, persuasive Black scholars who have given the issue careful thought have prompted me in my own rethinking. In June 2020, Kwame Anthony Appiah of New York University said "White" should be capitalized, just as "Black" is capitalized, in order to situate "White" within historically created racial identities that have linked the two terms over the very long run. For intellectual clarity, what applies to one should apply to the other.

More emphatically, Eve L. Ewing, a poet and sociologist of education at the University of Chicago, recently started capitalizing "White" in order to emphasize the presence of Whiteness as a racial identity: "Whiteness," she says, "is not only an absence." For Ewing, the capital "W" stresses White as a powerful racial category whose privileges must always remain in sight. As an example, she compares the fate of the

One way of remaking race is through spelling—using or not using capital letters. A more potent way is through behavior.

McCloskeys in Saint Louis, who pointed loaded firearms at peaceful protesters facing the lightest of legal consequences, with that of young Tamir Rice, playing with a toy gun in Cleveland, who lost his life. Ewing may have been thinking of James Baldwin, who said at Wayne State University in 1980, "White is a metaphor for power." The capital letter can underscore the existence of an unjust racial power imbalance.

In the thinking of Appiah, Ewing, and my Facebook friends, Whiteness is less saliently linked to White nationalism than to racial neutrality or absence. Their reasons for capitalizing "White" are quite separate from White nationalism. We should capitalize "White" to situate Whiteness within the American ideology of race, within which Black, but not White, has been hypervisible as a group identity. Both identities are products of the American ideology of race. One way of remaking race is through spelling—using or not using capital letters. A more potent way is through behavior. Capital letters can remind us all of being a part of the American ideology of race, and for this reason I have now come around to capitalizing all our races, Black, Brown, and White. Spelling may not change the world, but it signals a willingness to try. □

THE FRIENDSHIP TRAIN

Generosity and atonement in midcentury America

by Zachary Shore

Stills from the newsreel "Friendship Train Starts across US!," November 10, 1947. Courtesy UCLA Film & Television Archive

EVERYONE WANTED to be there. It was the kind of spectacle that only Hollywood could produce. Scores of searchlights crisscrossed the night sky, illuminating the fancy floats below. Ten live bands filled the grounds with music fit for the extravaganza. And the stars came out in force. John Wayne was there, and so was Mickey Rooney. The "Brazilian Bombshell" Carmen Miranda enchanted the crowd, while others swooned at the French-born actor Charles Boyer, still glowing from his performance in the hit film *Gaslight*. More than one hundred of the most renowned celebrities performed, mingled, and jockeyed to be seen. Half a million spectators braced the cold November chill, since most did not yet own a television. In 1947, TV was just beginning to penetrate American homes as the long postwar economic boom began, and TV crews were there to capture the event. The comedian Danny Thomas got a raucous laugh by shivering on stage, reflecting what the crowds were feeling. He bowed in mock reverence at California's Governor Earl Warren, who was seated with his wife on stage. The mood that night was ebullient, a striking contrast to the abject suffering that had brought them all there.

Across the Atlantic, Europeans were starving. The war had crippled food production. The massive bombing of roads, bridges, canals, and railway lines had shattered transportation routes, making the transit of food to cities that much harder. Drought had withered crops, further depleting what little food remained. More than two years had passed since Germany's surrender, but the lives of average people had only worsened. Tens of millions of children were enduring malnutrition, stunted growth, and disease. Mothers jostled and shoved their way into the scrums surrounding canned food distribution sites. Others picked through garbage dumps, searching for any edible scraps. With winter rapidly approaching, Europeans desperately needed nutrients or millions would soon die. The Continent was facing a grim postwar apocalypse, and Americans were being asked to help. The half a million who gathered that night in Hollywood had come to launch a distinctly American solution: the newly minted Friendship Train.

The Continent was facing a grim postwar apocalypse, and Americans were being asked to help.

It began as a publicity stunt, the brainchild of Drew Pearson, America's best-known syndicated columnist. Pearson had witnessed Soviet Army forces in France being lauded for supplying food aid while American shipments went unnoticed. Pearson wanted America to get credit for its own humanitarian efforts. Since early 1946, some Americans began eating less to make more food available for shipment to Europe. At President Truman's urging, Americans observed "meatless Tuesdays," cut down on bread consumption, and tried to reduce food waste. Exports rose, but it was not enough. By the fall of 1947, the situation had grown dire. The government intensified its efforts, but the public had to pitch in more. In one of Pearson's columns he proposed a Friendship Train that would race across America collecting food for Europe's hungry masses. He thought that if celebrities could accompany the train, the crowds would gather and donations would rise. Europeans would then see the true heart of the American people. But neither Pearson nor any others could have imagined just how ardently Americans would get on board with the idea of simple giving.

As the train prepared to leave Los Angeles, the nation's most celebrated songwriter, Irving Berlin, led the crowd in a round of "God Bless America," a song he had introduced less than a decade earlier. Hollywood's showstopping send-off contained eight freight cars full of food, including 160,000 pounds of sugar given by Hawaii, whose governor of course attended the glamorous event. From Hollywood the train sped through California's bread basket. Bakersfield supplied 80,000 pounds of grain. Fresno donated crates of raisins. Merced gave more dried fruit and canned milk. In Stockton, people held up signs reading "Hunger is the enemy of peace," "Food for our Friends," and "Bonjour, vive La France." Oakland, San Francisco, and Bay Area cities provided even more, throwing in a $10,000 cash donation.

The train picked up more food in Reno, where both the mayor and governor came out to greet it. Omaha added 50,000 pounds of flour plus more cash contributions. Stunned by the extent of average Americans' generosity, French Foreign Minister Henri Bonnet flew to meet the train in Omaha and witnessed for himself the spontaneous outpouring of support. He called it "America's far-reaching gesture of amity." And that reach just kept extending.

It was not just white Americans who joined in giving. Black Americans donated across the country. A group of Black Americans in Los Angeles pooled their funds to purchase a truckload of groceries for the train. Native Americans gave as well. Sioux Chief Ed White Buffalo, his wife, and their three children, all in traditional dress, presented the train with 78 ears of corn. Rich as well as poor folks gave. Henry Kaiser, a leading industrialist and future founder of the healthcare company Kaiser Permanente, made sure to be photographed loading boxes onto train cars as part of his contribution. A 73-year-old small-town grocer, Frank Tessier, donated a sack of flour from his store. Even little

children joined in the event. One four-year-old boy donated 400 pennies to the cause, providing perfect footage for the newsreels.

Cities vied to give the most of whatever they had. The tiny town of Sidney was not even on the schedule for a visit, but the town's leaders convinced the train to stop and accept their contributions. One boy literally offered the shirt off his back, which was immediately auctioned for the cause. Though the town barely numbered 10,000 residents, it raised $12,000. In Aurora, John Crumm made a special effort to gather food for the train. Crumm had been a prisoner of the Japanese during the war and knew the pain of hunger. He organized a group to pick the corn that still remained in the fields and that would otherwise have gone to waste. It was enough to sell for $825 worth of flour. By the time the train reached Council Bluffs, it stretched to 57 cars. And that town added five more. The train then rumbled on through Iowa, picking up more food and money everywhere it went. But Kansas broke all records, adding 83 boxcars of wheat. Governor Frank Carlson addressed an audience of thousands saying, "We have so much, the need is so great, and it takes so little from the individual that we must not fail to do our duty."

Try as they did, no city could top the fanfare that New Yorkers gave: 40 cars of food plus a ticker-tape parade. More than 100,000 New Yorkers lined the streets to celebrate this extraordinary act of giving. Even Hollywood's audacious send-off could not compare with the show that New York put on. Two railway barges laden with food took victory laps around the Statue of Liberty as jets of water 100 feet high arced across them in majestic streams. Then the Friendship Train's supplies were loaded onto the first of four ships that would cross the Atlantic to deliver its cargo to France. With the smashing of a champagne bottle on its bow, the USS *Leader* was rechristened the *Friend Ship* and sent on its way. Those shipments would go not just to the French but also to Italians, Germans, and Austrians—America's former foes.

Politicians of both parties attached themselves to the popular phenomenon. New York's Republican Governor Thomas E. Dewey, eyeing yet another run at the presidency, called the train "an important contribution to world peace." New York City's Democratic mayor, William O'Dwyer, convened a ceremony at City Hall, where thousands of children, released from school, were invited to participate in the festivities. The mayor proclaimed the episode "a material symbol of the desire of our people to relieve the hunger and suffering of our fellow humans in Italy and France." Warren Austin, America's ambassador to the United Nations, called it simply an act of "peace mongering."

Two railway barges laden with food took victory laps around the Statue of Liberty as jets of water 100-feet high arced across them in majestic streams.

New Yorkers gave an additional $73,000 toward the purchase of food. And throughout the episode, every corporation and labor union—from teamsters to dock workers, from railways to shipping lines—provided its services entirely free of charge. The hope had been to deliver the food to France and Italy by Christmas. At the ceremony, the French consul general referred to the captain of the *Friend Ship* as "a real Santa Claus."

By the close of its journey, the Friendship Train had swelled to an astonishing 481 cars, with the first shipment of food to France weighing more than eight million pounds. The film producer Harry Warner, chairman of the train committee, declared that "No other humanitarian appeal in history ever had such a quick and tremendous response." The committee had chosen Warner (of Warner Bros. Studio) to oversee the effort precisely because it wanted him to generate footage to play in movie theaters across Europe. The entire project was intended as a propaganda bonanza, a chance to showcase America's goodness on film. It was as if Americans were desperate to show the world who they truly were. But why?

LOOKING BACK, this orgy of ostentatious giving, the mugging for the camera, the battles over who could donate more or whose sacrifice could be more noble, seemed to have a performative dimension. Was it all just generosity for show, a public relations ploy, or worse—a neo-imperialist plot to hook the world on US goods? Or did the Friendship Train stem from a deep-rooted sense of kindness, a virtue hardwired into the American psyche. Cynics and true believers can debate, but most people harbor multiple motives for their acts. Whatever their intentions, the fact is that American giving saved lives. Years later, that was how it would be remembered, as Europeans made their gratitude known. And certainly, at the time, the donations were welcomed as a lifeline. Thank you letters arrived from overseas. From Vienna one man wrote to the Friendship Train committee chair of Hartford, Connecticut, "We cannot fully measure what this noble help means." He said that people like him could hardly have survived without the help that Americans so freely gave. A German man in Lüneburg described how much Germans looked forward to the many Cooperation for American Remittances to Europe (CARE) packages Americans sent.

Americans at the time did believe that they were especially good, exceptional in their behavior, a shining city on a hill. But this conviction did not square with their egregious actions of the past few years. During the war, America had engaged in many needlessly cruel acts against the innocent—actions that even the frenzy of wartime hatred could neither excuse nor explain. The triumphal postwar narrative declared that America had helped to rid the world of a vicious evil, and that was certainly true. But soon after victory, a number of influential Americans began reexamining some of the country's less charitable decisions toward its enemies, and they wanted to atone. They wanted to ensure that Americans lived up to the ideals they so often espoused. And above all, they wanted the world to see Americans the way they saw themselves, as a kind and decent people. This handful of leaders recognized that their notions of American goodness had at times been derailed, and even after the war, its occupation policies were exacerbating misery to no good end. But to climb aboard the Friendship Train, to reach a point of virtue, Americans first had to wrestle with their most recent vengeful acts. □

This essay is the Prologue of *This Is Not Who We Are: America's Struggle between Vengeance and Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, January 2023) and is reprinted here with permission.

On Ken Krimstein

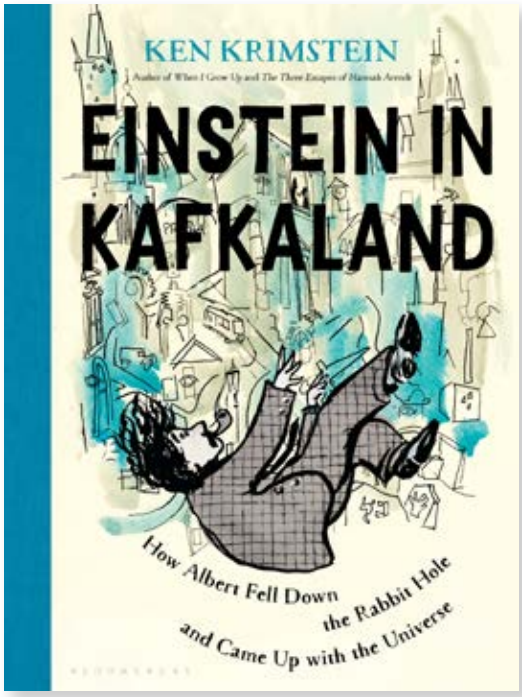
by Gal Beckerman

THERE IS NO END of surreality in Ken Krimstein's new book, *Einstein in Kafkaland*. Even Dali's melting clocks make an appearance. At various points, Albert Einstein talks with the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland*, the very long dead Greek mathematician Euclid, and the moon, which appears to have the face of Franz Kafka. Somehow, this all makes perfect sense within the logic of the story he tells and in service of the ideas he is exploring. Krimstein does not take on light subjects. What we have here is an investigation of the nature of reality, or as Einstein puts it when asked what he is up to, "I want to know what God was thinking when he made the world."

On the surface, the story involves Einstein's year and a half living in Prague from 1911 to 1912. It is during this period that he "solves gravity," which I wish I could describe in more detail but stretches the bounds of my own vocabulary and sense of physics. I'll quote, as Krimstein does, Harvard physicist Dimitrios Psaltis, who says that Einstein showed how "gravitating mass causes nearby objects to tilt their futures in its direction. Curved spacetime is not merely a matter of geometry; it's a matter of fate." During this same period Kafka, who Krimstein describes meeting Einstein once at a party—an event that actually took place—writes "The Judgement," the short story that would define his style.

To show the world-expanding nature of the revolutions these thinkers were attempting in Prague, Krimstein *has* to reach for the surreal. At one point Einstein, who envisions a fourth dimension to reality, is pulled through a mirror and we see, actually see, the disruption that such a conception would bring about. He argues about it with Euclid himself. Ideas themselves float through the pages. Time stretches like bubble gum. Krimstein seems to be following Kafka's own prescription as he explains them here, his face drawn as sharp as a flint: "Reading should be upsetting, disruptive, disjointing. The reader shouldn't just witness the story. The reader has to participate in it."

But what truly elevates this work, what makes it more than a brave exploration of difficult ideas, some too abstract and slippery for our mortal minds to hold, is the art. As he did in a previous book, *The Three Escapes of Hannah Arendt*, Krimstein combines these ideas with an exploration of biography, all rendered in his dreamy watercolors. Here, the palate is mostly black and white and teal. The liquid quality of the lines matches perfectly the sense that these concepts have the power to dissolve all that seems solid in our world. Moments of true beauty abound. When Einstein sees his new Prague office for the first time, he looks out the window and witnesses what he believes to be people dancing in a nearby park. A full page follows of ethereal figures rejoicing, their bodies pouring across the paper. Only on the next spread do we learn that these are patients at a mental institution.



This is what graphic novels can do at their best, use visual art to connect us emotionally and directly with material that language alone would otherwise make too heavy. We see Einstein's imaginings. We see the world as he saw it, the way he envisioned physical bodies moving in space, his thought experiments. And by mastering this form, making difficult ideas beautiful, Krimstein has brought us closer to understanding the ways that such revolutionary thinkers remade the world into the one we now live in.

Gal Beckerman is senior editor for books at *The Atlantic*.

Ken Krimstein

Artist Portfolio

2


HELLO
DOWN THERE.
BEER
SEX
KAFKA
BURGER
PRAG
ROCK

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I'M THE SKELETON WHO GRACES THE FAMED ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK IN PRAGUE, WHERE I'VE BEEN RINGING THE HOURS SINCE 1410—A LITTLE MORE THAN 66,357,553 TIMES AT LAST COUNT.

FROM MY PERCH, I'VE SEEN IT ALL.

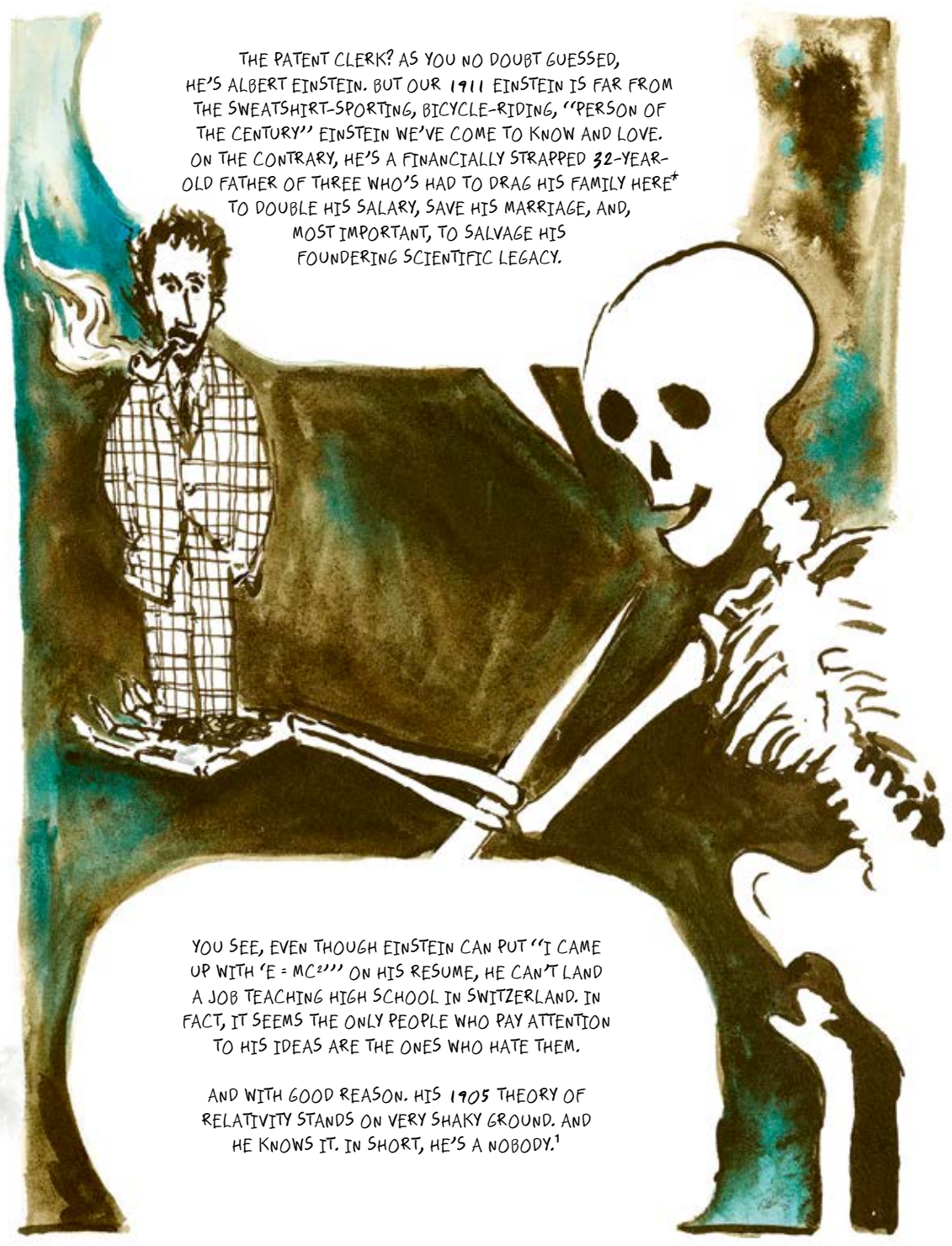
BUT NOTHING COMPARES TO WHAT I WITNESSED BETWEEN APRIL OF 1911 AND JULY OF 1912 IN THAT SOUVENIR SHOP ACROSS THE SQUARE.

BACK THEN, IT WAS THE WHITE UNICORN PHARMACY, WHERE, EVERY TUESDAY, THE POET, CRITIC, AND MYSTIC BERTA FANTA* HOSTED PRAGUE'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST FOR DISCUSSION, MOZART, AND STRONG TEA.

AND WHERE A FRUSTRATED PATENT CLERK AND AN AMBITIOUS YOUNG INSURANCE EXECUTIVE UNEXPECTEDLY FELL INTO EACH OTHER'S COMPANY.

* Berta Fanta, 1865–1918. First woman graduate of Karl-Ferdinand University in Prague, at that time called the Charles-Ferdinand University.


STUL
APOTEK
EINHORN



* No offense, but you could call 1911 Prague the Cleveland of Europe.


AND OUR RISING INSURANCE EXEC? MEET FRANZ KAFKA, AGE 28. AND CIRCA 1911, FAR FROM THE COCKROACH-CROWNED, HOODED-EYED "PROPHET OF MODERN LITERATURE" WHOSE VERY NAME HAS BECOME A BYWORD FOR MECHANIZED ENNUI AND THE ROBOTIC FUTILITY OF MODERN LIFE.
NO.
OUR KAFKA IS A SIX-FOOT-TWO, NATTILY DRESSED GO-GETTER IN THE BOOMING FIELD OF WORKER'S COMPENSATION, RENOWNED FOR HIS WORK ETHIC, AND EVEN, REPUTEDLY, THE INVENTOR OF THE MINER'S HARD HAT![2] TERMINALLY SINGLE, STRICTLY VEGETARIAN, AND A FANATICAL PREDAWN LAP-SWIMMER. HE'S STILL LIVING AT HOME WITH HIS PARENTS, AND, UNLESS YOU COUNT A COUPLE OF PRESS RELEASES, VIRTUALLY UNPUBLISHED.
ANOTHER NOBODY.

NEVERTHELESS, BY THE TIME EINSTEIN'S TRAIN PULLS OUT OF PRAGUE FIFTEEN MONTHS LATER, THE PHYSICIST WILL HAVE UNCOVERED THE KEY TO WHAT HE CALLED "SOLVING GRAVITY"—NOT ONLY RESCUING HIS LEGACY, BUT GIVING BIRTH TO WHAT'S BEEN CALLED EVERYTHING FROM "THE MOST PERFECT INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT OF MODERN PHYSICS"[3] TO "AMONG THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING."[4]

AND KAFKA?

BY THE END OF **1912**, HE'S PRODUCED HIS STORY "THE JUDGMENT," THE MASTERPIECE THAT CRACKED THE CODE OF THE MODERN WRITTEN WORD, LAUNCHING A BODY OF WORK THAT PHILIP ROTH SAID STANDS "AS A MONUMENT TO THE POWER OF LITERATURE TO TRANSCEND TIME AND PLACE, AND TO REVEAL THE HIDDEN DEPTHS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE."

NOBODY KNOWS QUITE HOW THEY DID IT. OR WHY.

BUT I HAPPEN TO HAVE ASSEMBLED SOME PRETTY COMPELLING CLUES. AS I'VE SAID, I'VE SEEN IT ALL.

SO PULL UP A CHAIR, AND LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT ALL WENT DOWN.

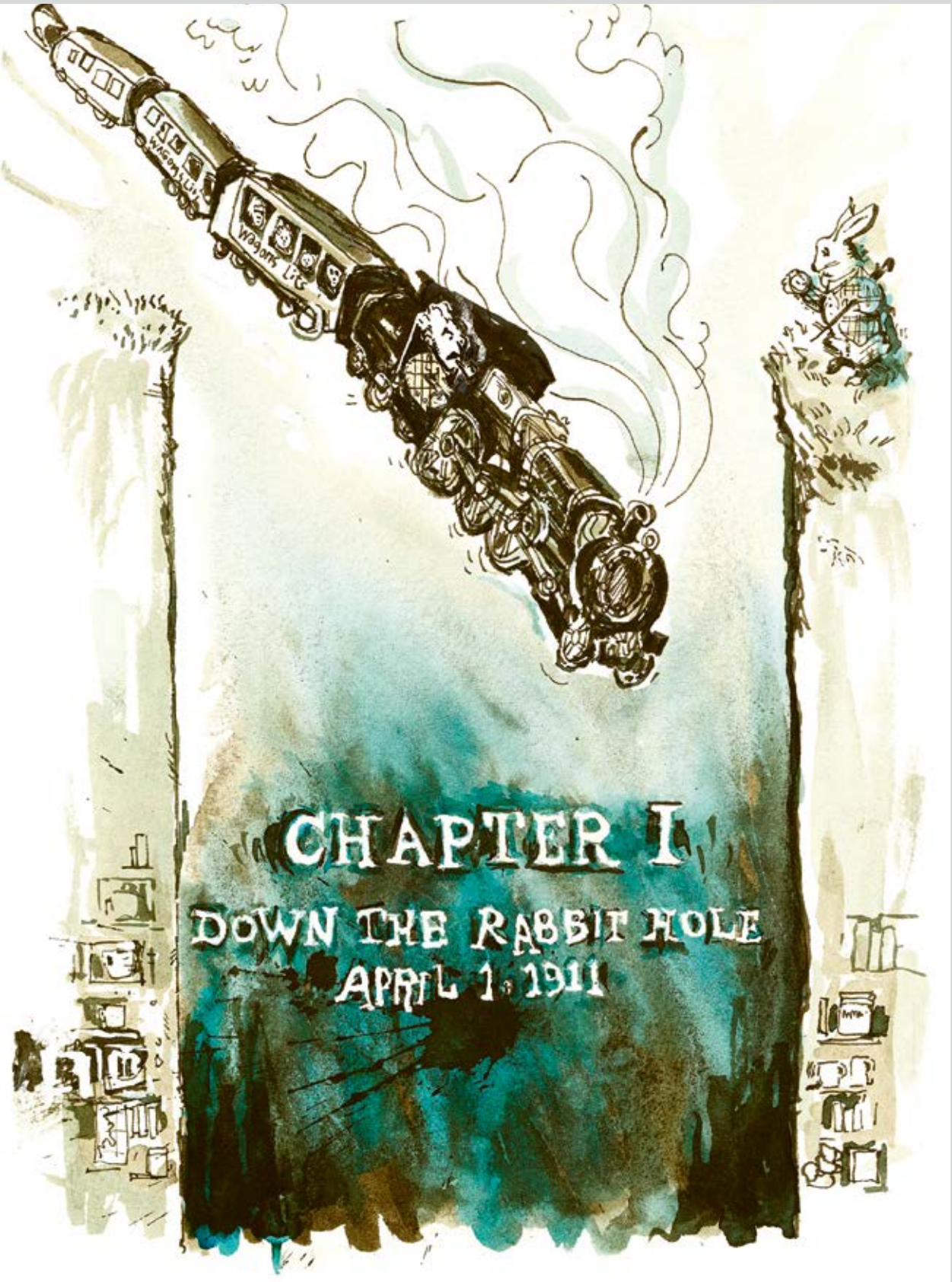


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Photo: Alexy Sokolov, *It's Time for Music*, 2018. Courtesy Pexels

FEEL-INS, KNOW-INS, BE-INS

The spiritual jazz of Pharoah Sanders

by Adam Shatz

THE MOST HYPNOTIC piece of music released in 2023 was recorded 48 years ago in a barely adequate studio in Rockland County, New York. Somewhere between minimalist meditation and impassioned slow jam, "Harvest Time" features a tenor saxophonist improvising over a spare, minor-key theme, drifting in and out against a backdrop of electric guitar, bass, and harmonium. It's a work of atmospheric, almost tactile, beauty, whose pleasures lie in the texture of the playing as much as the melody itself: the liquid warmth of the guitar, the vibrations of the harmonium, the saxophonist's vibrato and breath, the cycle of sound and sound's decay.

Pharaoh Sanders recorded "Harvest Time" in August and September 1976. It filled the entire A-side of his 1977 album *Pharoah*, his first in a few years. His contract with Impulse Records, the label for which he'd made a string of successful albums, had ended, and he was going through a period of turbulence. Bob and Nancy Cummins, the husband-and-wife team who ran India Navigation Records and revered Sanders, invited him to make a record.

Pharoah started out as a duet between Sanders on tenor saxophone and his bassist Steve Neil, but Sanders's idea for the ensemble quickly grew more ambitious. The Cumminses, fans moonlighting as producers, weren't prepared, and Sanders was so frustrated by the conditions of the studio in Rockland County that he walked out. After much pleading from the couple, he returned a month later to finish the recording, but he disliked the album and all but disavowed it, and for many years resisted requests to reissue it.

It's not hard to understand his disappointment. *Pharoah* did sound a little rickety, more like a bootleg than a professional studio recording. But for the album's admirers, that lack of polish only enhanced its clandestine aura. (As every fan knows, music you love is all the more beautiful when you're not supposed to have heard it.) Even as it fell out of print, *Pharoah* became a cult item, passed around by its admirers, sampled in Talib Kweli's "Great Expectations."

Sanders, who died in September 2022 at age 81, never changed his mind about *Pharoah*, but after several years of conversations with the label Luaka Bop, he finally agreed to have it reissued. The result is a handsome box set, featuring a luminous remastering of the original album and two live performances of "Harvest Time" from a 1977 European tour, along with interviews with Sanders and others, as well as essays by the critics Harmony Holiday, Pierre Crépon, and Marcus

Pharoah Sanders at the *Deutsches Jazzfestival Frankfurt*, October 26, 2013. Photo: Oliver Abels. Courtesy Wikimedia.

Moore, photographs of Sanders, and other memorabilia. The impressive packaging is somewhat improbable for an album that came close to vanishing—and music that seems to vanish each time you hear it. Once "Harvest Time" is over, you might think it was just a dream. Not unlike *Kind of Blue*, it finds depth in simplicity, a sense of radiant presence in the ephemeral.

THE SON OF a school cafeteria cook and a city employee, Ferrell Sanders was born in 1940 in Little Rock, Arkansas. His grandmother called him Pharoah; the name stuck. His family was so poor they couldn't buy records, but—as Sanders told one of his producers at Luaka Bop, in an interview recorded a few days before his death—they were widely admired as amateur singers in the community, although they never gave "a thought about trying to be heard singing." Sanders started out on drums before taking up the saxophone. Playing in blues and R&B bands, he was often forced to perform behind a curtain because whites "didn't want to see Black people."

In 1959, he fled Arkansas and settled in Oakland, California, where he studied with the alto saxophonist Sonny Simmons. A couple years later, he came to New York, where he was known as "Little Rock." During his first year in the city, he slept in the subway and paid for food by donating blood, until he got a job in the kitchen of the Playhouse, a restaurant in the Village. He didn't socialize much—he recalled being the "quiet person in the corner, checking out everything" during his early years in New York—but he began sitting in with the Afrofuturist pianist and bandleader Sun Ra, another refugee from the Jim Crow South. In 1963, he formed a quartet with pianist John Hicks, bassist Wilbur Ware, and drummer Billy Higgins.

Like most young saxophonists in New York in those years, Sanders was drawn to both Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane (who were, in turn, drawn to each other). His debut album, a 1964 quintet date called *Pharoah*, on ESP-Disk, veered in both directions, pairing Coleman-style themes with incendiary, Coltrane-style improvising. (Sanders would also appear on two classic albums by Coleman's associate, the trumpeter Don Cherry, *Symphony for Improvisers* and *Where Is Brooklyn?*, recorded in 1966 and 1967.) But he ultimately aligned himself with Coltrane, who hired Sanders after hearing him at the Village Gate. Coltrane reminded Sanders of a preacher and treated him like a son. He included Sanders on the epochal free-blowing session *Ascension*, recorded in June 1965, and made him a member of his band. Sanders distinguished himself—and terrified some audiences, who didn't know what to make of him—with his use of dissonant "extended techniques" on the horn, such as multiphonics (playing several notes at once), overblowing, and circular breathing, which allowed him to produce fluttering, vaguely Eastern-sounding tones.

Coltrane reminded Sanders of a preacher and treated him like a son. He included Sanders on the epochal free-blowing session Ascension, recorded in June 1965, and made him a member of his band.

"I always wondered why I was there with him and why he wanted me to stay with him," Sanders recalled. "He could have had anyone—someone more musically mature and advanced like Joe Henderson." Many listeners were similarly mystified by Coltrane's decision. Sanders's purposefully shrill screams—both in concert and on albums like *Meditations* and *Kulu Sé Mama*—were even more jarring, and seemed far less disciplined, than Coltrane's. But Coltrane, who introduced Sanders to his producer at Impulse!, Bob Thiele, regarded his protégé as "a man of large spiritual reservoir" and hailed "the strength of his playing." No doubt he also appreciated the rawness—the visceral, country sound—of Sanders's tenor. The "social consciousness" exhibited by Sanders's explosive playing, Amiri Baraka declared, "is more radical than sit-ins. We get to Feel-Ins, Know-Ins, Be-Ins."

After Coltrane's death, in 1967, Sanders became one of Impulse's most popular (and best-paid) artists, and one of the central figures—along with Coltrane's widow, Alice, on whose early albums he performed—in "spiritual jazz." The movement drew inspiration from Coltrane's devotional masterpiece, *A Love Supreme*, and from the growing sense of connection among young Black musicians to what was then proudly called "the Third World." For these musicians jazz was the expression not so much of American democracy (a democracy that, in any case, had never respected their rights) as of a vast, insurrectionary terrain whose borders stretched from Africa and Asia to the streets of Harlem, Watts, and the South Side of Chicago.

This region of the mind didn't have a president, but it did have a pharaoh. The composer of "Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt" wasn't from Egypt—he was from Little Rock. But he didn't *look* like he was from Little Rock, with his ceremonial robes and hats and beatific manner. The groups he led were large ensembles, communal gatherings as much as bands, bristling with non-Western percussion instruments. Sanders scarcely spoke about his work—he made the shy, taciturn Coltrane seem gregarious—but he didn't have to. His soaring, gentle growl on the tenor—incendiary yet full of yearning; radiating, by turns, insurgent impatience and serene, cosmic soul—embodied the new Black consciousness as much as the voices of Nina Simone and Curtis Mayfield did.

Sanders's best-known piece, "The Creator Has a Master Plan," on the 1969 album *Karma*, took the bass line of the first movement of *A Love Supreme* and turned it into a groovy anthem, complete with yodeling by

the singer Leon Thomas. (It was at the top of the Billboard jazz charts for three months.) He was still screaming on his horn: this was, after all, "fire music," and he had plenty to spare. But he now used his kinetic overblowing as an effect, a kind of florid punctuation, rather than as the content of his playing, as he had in Coltrane's band. For all his associations with the free jazz avant-garde, he revealed himself to be a populist, even a pop artist, playing with fervent lyricism over the simplest of vamps.

Ed Michel, who replaced Thiele as Sanders's producer at Impulse in 1970, likened recording him to "having a village in the studio." Incense was lit, cooks prepared vegetarian meals for the musicians and their wives, and then "Pharoah would take an R&B

For all his associations with the free jazz avant-garde, he revealed himself to be a populist, even a pop artist, playing with fervent lyricism over the simplest of vamps.

lick and shake it until it vibrated to death, into freedom, and let it coalesce over a long time." (Michel had to flash the lights on and off in the studio to get him to stop playing, which didn't always work, because Sanders often played with his eyes closed.) Sanders was not Coltrane's only heir on the tenor—Archie Shepp and Albert Ayler had equally strong claims—but he brought fire music to a wider audience than it had ever known, and made it part of the soundtrack of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

There's an unmistakable element of kitsch in Sanders's Impulse work, from the pan-religious titles (*Tauhid, Karma, Summun Bukmun Umyun*), to Thomas's lyrics ("The Creator has a master plan/Peace and happiness for every man. . ./The Creator makes but one demand/peace and happiness through all the land"). Listening to the albums Sanders recorded from 1967 to 1973, you can almost smell the incense burning. Yet his sound is so distinctive, and so powerful,

that it transcends—and indeed almost redeems—these period trappings. *Elevation* (1974) was Sanders's last album on Impulse, and that's effectively what he did: he took the humblest of riffs and made them seem impossibly grand. Unlike Coltrane, Sanders was not a harmonically sophisticated musician—his later efforts to rebrand himself as a hard-bop player were less than convincing—but he knew how to sing through his horn. "I'm not so much of a technical player myself," he admitted in a 1995 interview, "and probably not that much of an intellectual player as some other musicians. What I do is express."

In "Harvest Time"—a tune named by his wife at the time, Bedria, who plays harmonium on it—Sanders achieves a comparable miracle of expressive elevation, with nothing more than a languid two-chord vamp set up at his request by his guitarist, Tisziji Muñoz. The track begins with Muñoz playing the theme, soon joined by Steve Neil on bass. Sanders plays the theme very softly, with a delicacy and spareness reminiscent of Stan Getz playing with João Gilberto—or indeed of Gilberto himself. After a pause, he returns, playing with greater force, his tone thick with vibrato. He improvises on the theme, breaking it into ruminative phrases, before giving way to a solo by Neil.

When Sanders reappears, he explores the range of his instrument, sometimes letting out cries that suggest the falsetto leaps of a soul singer, at others descending, with a quietness bordering on secrecy, into the lower registers of the horn—all the while never losing the thread of the melody. Halfway into the piece he plays his signature flutter, but it's unusually understated for Sanders, and instead of rising to a scream he descends, accompanied by Muñoz and Neil, into the softest of whispers, until we hear nothing but his mouthpiece—something a more "professional" recording might have corrected, but which only adds to the music's sensuousness. After the sounding of a gong, Bedria Sanders enters on harmonium, producing a drone that moves toward us and recedes, a sound that Pharoah mimics with long, undulating tones.

The harmonium's drone will evoke, for some listeners, the sound of the tanpuri on Alice Coltrane's *Journey into Satchidananda*, which featured Pharoah on soprano saxophone. But Sanders may well have been thinking not of India but of his childhood in Little Rock, where he played the harmonium to accompany his mother's singing, and the overall ambience of "Harvest Time" is more earthy than celestial. The music luxuriates in the experience, or perhaps the memory, of a season, only to mark its passing, as Sanders's tenor fades away, overwhelmed by waves of bass, guitar, and harmonium.

WHAT, THEN, WAS so magical about the studio session? Not the studio itself, according to Sanders: "The sound wasn't what I wanted. . . . And they didn't have the right equipment." In her perceptive liner notes for the Luaka Bop box set, Harmony Holiday suggests that the key to understanding the recording, which she describes as "a manifesto reluctant to declare its power as such," is that it's "a love letter." A love letter to whom? To Bedria, whom he'd only recently married, Holiday writes, but also to his family, and indeed to Black Americans who'd found themselves in the political wilderness after the setbacks of the Nixon era.

The second track, a long and rather awkward vocal by Sanders (no substitute, alas, for the mellifluous Leon Thomas), accompanied by an expanded ensemble that includes drums and percussion, is called "Love Will Find a Way." On the album's third and last track, "Memories of Edith Johnson," Sanders pays homage to his aunt Edith, "a natural" vocalist who "would sing loud and clear, and very resonant." A haunting lament, it shifts between Sanders's stentorian tenor and strange,

sorrowful, wordless vocals. Unlike *Karma, Pharoah* is not a rousing, inspirational album, yet, as Holiday argues, it finds consolation and hope in family, in romantic and communal love, and in the rebirth symbolized by the autumn harvest.

Sanders appears to have been in search of a different, more commercial kind of rebirth after losing his Impulse contract, and over the next decade he would make some painfully tacky records, crossing over into R&B and easy listening. But he never lost his sound, and in the right setting he could remind you why Coltrane had hired him. He performed irresistibly exuberant covers of Coltrane and Nigerian high life on *Rejoice* (1981), a straight-ahead album with an all-star band that included John Hicks and Coltrane's drummer Elvin Jones, and he was incandescent on the guitarist Sonny Sharrock's last record, *Ask the Ages* (1991). In *The Trance of Seven Colors* (1994), a collaboration with Maleem Mahmoud Ghania and a group of Moroccan Gnawa musicians, he found exactly the point at which his sound converged with theirs, achieving an unusually persuasive synthesis of Black American and North African traditions.

The pioneer of fire music also transformed himself into one of jazz's finest ballad players, above all when he was playing Coltrane tunes like "Naima" and "After the Rain." And a year before he died, Sanders scored a surprise hit with *Promises*, a project with the electronic musician Floating Points (Sam Shepherd) and the London Symphony Orchestra, also released by Luaka Bop. The monotonous electro-acoustic backdrops composed by Floating Points were insipid and sometimes shamelessly derivative of Alice Coltrane, but Sanders's playing was so sublime that it almost made you forget them.

Still, nothing that he recorded after 1977 reached the lyrical heights—the incantatory, almost mystical power—of "Harvest Time." In an interview included on the box set, Bedria Sanders remembers that when she first met her former husband, he appeared to have "a blue light aura all around him." Close your eyes when you listen and you might see it. □

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FIRST MEETING

Every mark on paper
an acoustic signal

by David Grubbs

I'VE TAUGHT COLLABORATIVE art-making with graduate students for two decades, and much of what I've learned has never struck me as broadly generalizable. My preferred approach to writing about working collaboratively has been to start with a close description of individual projects and the dynamics of collaborative relationships. The question is less *What can I say?* and more *Where should I begin?* Through an inductive process, I imagine writing my way into a better understanding of the subject.

What prepared me to teach collaboration? (Who said that I was even prepared to teach collaboration?) From an early age, there was playing in bands and then reconsidering the model of the band. Performing music in improvised settings, often with fleeting combinations of players. Working with visual artists under the umbrella of a music group—quasi music-group, or music group plus something else—and then working with artists outside of predominantly musical contexts to create sound compositions for sculpture, installation, video, and more. Toggling between but also combining—working to hybridize—spaces of performance and exhibition. Teaming up with writer friends, with a predilection for poets, to create recordings and performances.

David Grubbs and Susan Howe perform *WOODSLIPPERCOUNTERCLATTER* at ISSUE Project Room, Brooklyn, NY, September 25, 2013. Photo: Bradley Buehring

I frequently have the sense that no matter how long I wind up working with a given individual, we're pursuing the consequences of a first conversation—we follow threads and develop themes that have been present from the start. At least I find myself wanting to believe this. Perhaps it's from a conviction that much is contained within a single conversation and that its interpretations are subsequently hashed out over months, years, or decades of collaborative work. The intensity accorded to preliminary conversations or, as a musician, first opportunities to perform together, nominates even seemingly incidental details, sensations—everything that burns into memory, everything that's rehearsed such that it becomes memory—as shared repertoire.

When I first met Susan Howe, we had been tasked with creating performance works based on her poetry, and she was kind enough to make the trek to my apartment in Brooklyn. A basic question at that first meeting: "Why add music or sound to Susan's work, which is already sonic?"

In that conversation, we talked about how we might realize a performance that could be something other than a poetry reading with musical accompaniment. About avoiding a clear demarcation of foreground and background, of music or sound composition cast in what's understood to be a supporting role. We found ourselves listing memorable disappointments with the sonic dimension of poetry readings, one category of which sees writers put their heads down and plow through texts, their eagerness to be finished apparent to all. I recalled one reading that had been recommended to me because of the centrality of music to the poet's practice. At the event I marveled at the flatness and sameness and rapidity of the delivery—the narrow range of its aural effects—and realized that the writer's work had been recommended not because of the musicality of its language or the potential for that to be instantiated in a reading, but rather because of the way that it thematizes music history and references structural conceits from music composition. A profound disjunction.

I likened listening to that reading to J.G. Ballard's short story "Manhole 69," which involves a scientific study in which an experimental surgical procedure enables its subjects to overcome sleep. The scientist responsible for the study imagines that the test subjects who no longer need to sleep will eventually settle upon a slower, steadier, healthier tempo compared to the rest of us who barrel through our days and collapse nightly with exhaustion. He imagines and excuses in advance the judgments of these future humans upon the needlessly frantic lives of those who haven't yet received his brainchild upgrade. Of course, in Ballardesque style, the people who stop sleeping none too gradually lose their minds and die. When attending readings, I have felt like one of the test subjects in "Manhole 69," at least in the honeymoon period before things start to go terribly wrong. What's the rush? Everything seems too fast, too compressed. The playback is pitched at the wrong speed. The tempo could be halved, quartered; it could be free to slacken or tighten at will, to get a kick out of navigating extremes.

Susan's and my conversation turned to experiences we'd had in which, as a listener, one felt alive to an art of sound that wouldn't necessarily best be described with reference to music. When speaking of relations among language and sound, Susan's inclination was to add to the equation the visual appearance of writing so that, instead of hinging exclusively on the categories of poetry and music, the discussion soon pivoted around sound, text, and image.

The first examples Susan named as having meaningfully occupied this nexus were the sculptor Carl Andre's poems and Agnes Martin's paintings that incorporate a single word of text. I noted that the question I'd asked about works that function—works that succeed—through a multiplicity of effects, including the sonic elicited examples from Susan that need not be sounded, and indeed would more conventionally be described as silent. The example she alighted upon that seemed the most apropos of our task was a reading by John Cage that Susan had seen at the St. Mark's Poetry Project's annual New Year's Day Marathon on January 1, 1976. Cage read excerpts from *Mureau*—a mesostic work based on the journals of Henry David Thoreau—to an extraordinary hush in the midst of what throughout the day had been an intermittently carnivalesque atmosphere. Cage's reading made a profound impression on her—in its nuance, in its alien musicality, in what it asked of its audience, and in how its audience responded with an attentiveness to every word, and even beneath the level of the word, with Cage's vocalizations of isolated vowels and consonant clusters, and the at-times-lengthy silences between utterances. As a performance it was both impossible and unnecessary to classify as music or literature or theater. Susan didn't hesitate to describe it as one of the finest readings she had ever seen. Or heard.

Much as Susan could point to the 1976 St. Mark's Poetry Project reading as a signal moment in her relation to sound and performance, I was able to point to a reading *of hers* that for me prompted a similar kind of admiration and reconsideration of an artistic practice that I thought I knew well. In 1993, Susan came to the University of Chicago to read from her then-recent book *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History*. *The Birth-mark* is Susan's second published volume of literary criticism, coming after the influential *My Emily Dickinson*, a work of feminist criticism that lays out the history of male editors' decisions in preparing versions of Dickinson's poetry for publication. It's a work that inaugurated a reappraisal of Dickinson's art through the close study of her manuscripts, but also one that testifies to Howe's ardor for immersing herself in archival materials,

a passion and a commitment that inflects the breadth of her writing.

The main thing I recalled about her reading from *The Birth-mark* was my disbelieving ears. What was I hearing with her abrupt darting into and out of poetry? Readers of *The Birth-mark* encounter numerous such unanticipated junctures, various hidden seams, but the experience differs in kind between reading and listening. Here's an example from the chapter titled "Submarginalia":

> Many out-of-the-way volumes,
> especially books about the
> Puritan Revolution in England,
> and books by and about Puritans
> in seventeenth-century New
> England are my darling studies,
> and I used them while I was
> writing these essays
>
> scattered by the fratricidal
> Enlightenment
>
> she turns the tables without
> rejecting Abraham Isaac Jacob.
> That kind of adoration. The time
> is autumn morning evening.
> To collect an error in the shelter
> of theory send disciples soon.

In some ways, I find this to be Susan's poetry at its most potent, most jarring—when it emerges from otherwise clear and transparent prose, when it suddenly flares up. In its printed form we see the line break that marks the abandonment of a paragraph in mid-sentence; the resulting isolated phrase then enjambs with a paragraph of a heightened, poetic language from which punctuation has largely disappeared. A different sort of transmission breaks into the channel.

Surprising though this kind of interruption may be when encountered on the page, I experienced it as more disruptive and strange in Susan's reading. The eyes can see trouble up ahead, can take in at a glance when a paragraph lacks a final period, and can in a flash make meaning of unexpected capitalization or a decision to eliminate punctuation. In the above excerpt, the switch from the first to the third person makes more sense to the eye than to the ear as the lowercase "she" that follows the isolated phrase "scattered by the fratricidal Enlightenment" appears as if collaged from a different source; to the listener at Susan's reading, the shift is more inexplicable. These distinctive transitions suggest a threshold. But rather than a decisive crossing over or change in state—not the transition to the underworld in Jean Cocteau's film *Orpheus*, in which Orpheus dons rubber gloves before plunging his hands through a mirror (gloves to protect actor Jean Marais's hands when dipping them into a tub of mercury)—these threshold experiences are those of crossing but also quickly re-crossing, entering and hastily exiting, hesitating, hovering, twisting, flitting. These unexpected stylistic shifts in Susan's reading from *The Birth-mark* appeared without preamble; in her presentation there was no warning, no disclaimers about hybridity—just the text and her extraordinary delivery. Every time she shifted from the more straightforward critical prose into language of a greater intensity, language undergoing a rapid change in pressure, I found myself attending closely to the language—experiencing the pleasure of so doing—and never taking for granted its function. These transitions never calcified into a technique. Years later, at our first meeting, Susan modestly accepted the compliment.

The final example that Susan brought up in this conversation had to do with a remark that appeared in one of Joseph Beuys's lectures. Three years after this preliminary meeting in Brooklyn, at a point by which we had created the performance works *Thiefth* (comprising *Thorow* and *Melville's Marginalia*) and *Souls of the Labadie Tract*, Susan and I gave a talk together at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, in which she referenced this same statement from Beuys. Thankfully, there's an audio recording of the presentation, so I can quote from it—this mysterious statement from Beuys I've heard Susan refer to several times but that I don't believe has appeared in her published writings. Addressing the impact on her work of the sonic potential of writing, she offered:

> I just have to say that I've done
> a lot of work with manuscripts.
> Emily Dickinson, particularly,
> and I think her late manuscripts
> should be shown as drawings. . . .
> Beuys said one of the most
> wonderful things in one of his
> lectures that I always say now
> when I'm trying to persuade people
> about manuscripts. He said that
> "every mark on paper is an acoustic
> signal." That is something I truly
> believe. Every piece of a letter,
> every shape of a letter, every word,
> how words are placed on the page,
> the minute you put a mark on
> a page, it's acoustic.

Then she paused. It was a long pause. She gave the listeners time to reflect on the many things that could be understood by this curious formulation: "Every mark on paper is an acoustic signal." What does it mean? Does it mean that any conceivable mark is capable of being translated into sound? Does it mean that each mark awaits translation into its unique, determinate sound? Should the emphasis in this particular quotation—"every mark on paper is an acoustic signal"—be the suggestion that encoded within visual imagery is the experience of duration? Even though we've discussed it on multiple occasions, I'm not sure how best to boil down what this phrase means to Susan, beyond expressing a commitment to both the visual and aural registers of mark-making.

At the lecture in Chicago, it was with this statement—a return to one of the details that resonated most strongly for me from our first meeting—that Susan concluded the introduction to her work. In the long pause that followed, like everyone else in the room she also seemed to be weighing its many possible meanings. It was an especially rich silence. □

LITERATURE MATTERS

Negotiating identity in contemporary German fiction

by Agnes Mueller

THE HAMAS ATTACKS of October 7 and Israel's destructive war in Gaza have dramatically increased tensions in America—not just between Jews and Muslims, or in widely publicized university campus protests. An unprecedented level of tension also infiltrates nearly every level of political discourse. Antisemitism has become newly charged—despite various attempts to define it—owing to new acts of hate speech; it is just as often weaponized for rhetorical gain. Concerns about how to position oneself vis-à-vis accusations of Zionism, genocide, and colonial hegemony shape Jewish and non-Jewish identities and shore up troubling alignments. Younger generations disillusioned with an already divisive political landscape are no longer interested in conversations about the value of Western democracy.

The elephant in the room, of course, is the memory of the Holocaust. Israel today would not exist in its highly contested current form were it not for the challenges to create a space for Jews after the Shoah. Israeli Jews' feelings of persecution may date back to biblical times, but today's conflict is enmeshed with political decisions and opinions originating in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.

What can we do to alleviate this threadbare opposition between Jews and Muslims? How can we engender new kinds of conversations that have been dominated by entrenched positions of "oppressor" and "victim"?

Germany—yes, Germany, land of historical Nazi perpetrators that today has a significant Muslim population—might lend a fresh yet well-versed perspective, thanks to new works of creative fiction. Instead of unleashing countless opinions on social media, recent German art and literature is providing more congenial access to the issue of Holocaust memory, Jews, and Muslims. The wider world should take note.

GERMAN JEWISH AZERBAIJANI writer Olga Grjasnowa's recent novel *Der verlorene Sohn* [The Prodigal Son] (2020) is, at first glance, not a book about Holocaust memory. Born in 1984, Grjasnowa came from Azerbaijan with her family at the age of 11. Her

novel, about a kidnapped Muslim boy subjected to suffering outsider status and eventually assimilating to the culture of his czarist Russian imperialist captors, seems to tell us more about expansionist Russia than about Judaism, much less Holocaust memory, since the setting in the novel predates the twentieth century.

The plot centers on a Muslim boy named Jamalludin, son of Imam Shamil, in the Caucasian region of Dagestan. In 1839, Jamalludin is given as a hostage to the Russians by his father, a powerful sheik. Jamalludin grows up as a special protégé of Czar Nicholas I. Even though he is initially very much a stranger, an "other" in the Russian Empire, he learns about the history of his new home and also how to suppress his resistance to Russian imperialism. His assimilation, as well as his career as an elite officer of the czar ends abruptly when he is suddenly sent back to Dagestan. But in his "home" of Dagestan, Jamalludin is also now a stranger. His brothers and even his father regard him with suspicion. He is a "foreigner" twice over: in Russia, as a Muslim and Arab stranger, the other to czarist and Christian-orthodox norms; in Dagestan, a stranger regarded as a czarist and infidel.

To the contemporary German reader, Grjasnowa's story evokes Holocaust memory in multiple ways: the plot details the situation of a permanent exile, the abduction and then deportation to a location that is not chosen by the protagonist, as well as the protagonist's fate as stemming from authoritarian and repressive power structures, war, and ethnic discrimination. It is important that the central theme of the novel is precisely not a genocide. (Grjasnowa had, in fact, written on the theme of genocide as it inflects Holocaust memory in her 2012 novel, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt* [All Russians Love Birch Trees].) The kidnapping, deportation, and exile in *The Prodigal Son* happen to a boy who is Muslim, not Jewish, and the experiences of anxiety and resulting fragmentation of identity described can be seen as comparable to other experiences of flight, expulsion, exile, or forced migration. The text thus evokes important points of connection between the Muslim protagonist and different figures who are marked "Jewish." Especially with our contemporary, post-1945 knowledge about antisemitism before and after the Holocaust, "being different" stands out as the main theme.

Instead of unleashing countless opinions on social media, recent German art and literature is providing more congenial access to the issue of Holocaust memory, Jews, and Muslims.

The novel's title is not only a reference to the prodigal son of Jesus's parable in Luke; it also thematizes a son who is *actually* lost. Jamalludin is lost to his homeland and to his father, and he has lost a home. "Lost" is a signifier for Jamalludin being without a home, twice, and being culturally different in each of the places he inhabits. His permanent homelessness reminds one of the figure of Ahasverus, the eternally wandering Jew. Jamalludin's deportation to imperialist Russia and migration back to Dagestan impart upon him the quality of *wandering*. More concrete narrative moments indicate a connection between Jamalludin's experiences with images of Jewish flight and expulsion during the Shoah and post-Shoah times. For example, after a confrontation with the explicit, disturbing, and for him unacceptable antisemitism of his Russian officer companions, Jamalludin reacts with outrage, shame, and pity:

> Jamalludin was angry, but also ashamed [. . .] for his entire surroundings, and then there was another, quieter feeling that he had not yet known: self-pity. Images of the Jewish boys never left him, and those from his own departure from Akhoulgo reappeared.

Jamalludin's trajectory of flight, expulsion, deportation, and migration is compared directly with the fate of the Jewish boys who, also separated from their parents as young children, were forced to march from their remote villages to St. Petersburg. To the contemporary reader, this is an easily recognizable reference to the death marches of Jewish prisoners during the Shoah. A Muslim story set long before the Second World War recalls later Jewish suffering. Such an overlay challenges our preconceived ideas about identity by relating the Jewish fate to that of Muslims. Historical specificity is momentarily suspended so that the emotions are what matters most. In literary fiction, the Jewish voice can align with the Muslim voice. This new voice articulates shared feelings of anger, shame, and (self) pity—emotions that shape our contemporary moment, as well.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS Kat Kaufmann's *Superposition* of 2015. Focused mostly on post-Soviet experiences in Berlin, it tells the story of 26-year-old jazz pianist Izy Lewin. Jewish and originally from St. Petersburg, Izy dives into contemporary Berlin nightlife and its rugged alcohol, drug, and sex scene. (Kaufmann was born in 1981 in Leningrad but now lives in Berlin.) Izy's Russian and Jewish identity is woven into an experimental, tough-sounding, contemporary idiom. Antisemitism is cited as the reason for the narrator's dystopian outlook. The text suggests that it is a privilege for the narrator and her imaginary child to be able to conceal their Jewish and Russian identities, and Izy seems especially pleased that no one would guess that she was Jewish and from Russia because of her pronunciation—her ability to roll the German "r." Izy wants to pass as a German; she achieves this through language.

The object of Izy's unhappy, unrequited love throughout the story is Timur. He is the only person who can provide an imaginary home for her. Importantly, the name "Timur" suggests a connection with Islam

and Muslim identity. The fourteenth-century figure of Timur was a Turco-Mongol conqueror who called himself the "Sword of Islam." His expansive empire included Transoxiana (today Uzbekistan), parts of Turkestan, Afghanistan, Persia, Syria, Kurdistan, Baghdad, Georgia, and Asia Minor; he also invaded parts of India. Though not explicit, this latent contextual reference weighs heavily for contemporary Berlin with its significant Muslim population. The name has ties to Islam but also dilutes any specific place of identity into a more ubiquitous "other," one that is Eastern but not clearly Russian.

Presenting such an ambiguous figure charged with being a "home" for the Jewish protagonist, while not providing strong markers of racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural identity, other than alluding to Islam, challenges and broadens our views concerning German Jewish and Muslim identity. Via the figure of Izy's aspirational love, we are invited to transcend the Russian Jewish identity, to one that, like Timur, is merely defined as Germany's "other." The repeated invocation of *Heimat* (homeland), which Izy can only find in the memory of her love for Timur, dispels any previous expectations of her recovery of a Russian Jewish identity. As spelled out towards the end of the narrative, Izy is in a position (or superposition) of "polysingularity."

Polysingularity describes a state of mind that defies our conventions of identity. Singular identity means that we subscribe—consciously or subconsciously—to one way of being. We can even subscribe to multiple singular identities. For example, Izy is Jewish, Russian, and female. Polysingularity means that each of these identities informs, changes, and alters all the others, causing a multiplicity of differently interacting parts. This concept is paratextually inserted, in English, in the middle of the book, as it best describes the continually changing mode of existence in which Izy finds herself. Taken as a marker for Izy's experiential way of thinking, polysingularity is a form of memory—first and foremost, "the natural condition of our mind."

Kaufmann's fictional migration narrative is productive when discussing the topics of Holocaust memory, antisemitism, and current politics, because of the ways in which it opens the concept of identity to dismantle its confining features. In *Superposition*, language acts as a transmitter of identity, but one that is tenuous, malleable, and pliable rather than fixed or fated. Identity—Jewish, Muslim, German, or Russian—is not subject here to politics or posturing or to advancing political, social, and intellectual pursuits. As such, Kaufmann's literary imagination offers a new conceptual frame for German, Jewish, Russian, Muslim, or American identity that helps defy antisemitism by creating a new link to Holocaust memory. That link is now made via migratory, polysingular identities, articulated by Jewish subjects who are Muslim, Turkish, Ukrainian, Russian, and geographically as well as historically removed migrant "others."

Polysingularity means that each of these identities informs, changes, and alters all the others, causing a multiplicity of differently interacting parts.

Some new German fiction, as such, invents Jewish subjects who understand that their identity is no longer fixed, even while Holocaust memory still defines and redefines experiences of being Jewish. Hybrid, superimposed identities may narrate new experiences of Muslims and Jews alongside each other, rather than in binary opposition: Grjasnowa's story is set in a Russian past, informing a later Jewish moment and showing the similarity in Muslim and Jewish emotions; Kaufmann's story is set in today's Berlin, providing a model for bringing Jewish and Muslim identities in conversation.

But Grjasnowa and Kaufmann are but two examples of new German and Jewish literary voices in Germany, among them Sasha Marianna Salzmann, Dimitrij Kapitelman, Lena Gorelik, Marina Frenk, and Jan Himmelfarb. These Jewish migrants from the former Soviet Union arrived as children with their parents as part of Germany's quota refugee program. Initiated in the early 1990s, it was enacted in part to show the rest of Europe—and the world—how Germany was actively addressing the atrocities of the past by inviting new Jewish migrant populations into a newly unified Germany. Flippantly referred to as *Wiedergutmachungsjuden* ("make-good-again Jews"), the program itself yielded only mixed results, since not all migrants were "Jewish" in the ways that politicians had expected. But the literary production of many who arrived as young children and found their migration experiences aligned with that of Muslims is astoundingly prolific, popular, and highly visible, even in spite of—or because of—their first language not being German.

TO RETURN TO the opening conundrum: this moment of a new literary production in Germany (many of the texts are available in English translation) can help us in America, Israel, and elsewhere seize new opportunities to approach entrenched debates around Jewish and Muslim identity positions. This new German literature explicitly shows how identity is always constructed, never fixed, and how young people especially make meaning of their worlds by connecting with the experiences and emotions of other "others." In so doing, it evidences the simplicity of the "victims" versus "oppressors" setup—often the tagline of current popular opinion. Literature matters, despite rumors to the contrary. And Germany's memory culture may be flawed and insufficient in many ways. But young migrants have set their migratory experiences in Germany against the forever present backdrop of Holocaust to create works of fiction that address the current moment. □

THE SEQUEL

Fiction by Mona Simpson

"To call a story a true story is
an insult to both art and truth."
– Vladimir Nabokov

NO ONE TOLD ME when my aunt Essie died. I still don't know the exact date. I stumbled upon the fact when, on a breezy afternoon phone call from California near the beginning of this century, my mom referred to her sister in the past tense.

I interrupted, and asked her what she meant.

"Oh, Essie died," she said.

In response to my angry questions, I learned that my aunt had passed away two years earlier. My mother hadn't told me. Neither had my cousin Stevie, Essie's only child. I guessed (correctly) that my mother hadn't gone to the funeral. Apparently, she hadn't wanted me to go either.

"Well, you're always so busy," she said.

"I would have gone," I said and hung up.

You would think I'd have called my cousin right then. But I didn't and a decade passed. Then one morning, in the tardy spring of 2012, a message from him landed in my inbox. I ate breakfast, made coffee and then clicked it open.

I tried to call, got your voice mail. Your recordings are full. I need to let you know, my baby girl Kelly Rose died.

Kelly Rose! Ellen. She was fourteen years younger than me. Only 41.

Had she been sick? I tried to remember the last time I'd talked to her or her dad. It'd been years, but even so, I believed I would have heard if she'd had something serious. Something you could die from.

I called my cousin Stevie and felt momentarily relieved to hear his voice on the machine. We talked seldom enough that every time I dialed, I worried that it might not be the right number anymore. I tried my mom but the nurses station told me she was sleeping.

It must have been a car crash, I thought. How else does a 41-year-old die?

All day I kept my ringer on.

I'D WRITTEN A BOOK about Kelly Rose, whom I'd called Ellen. *Help*, my first and only novel, had split my life into a before and an after. Some people say that about meeting their husband or giving birth. For me, it was the publication of that slender book when I was 34, the result of a lark.

Throughout my twenties, I spent nights reporting for the freelance articles it took me months to write. Twice, I came close to being hired by a city desk. Though I lived those years without health insurance, each of the near-misses turned out to be good luck; neither newspaper survived the decade.

The lark: A friend from my nine-to-five job at a women's magazine tried to lure me to a tap dance class one Sunday. I liked Isabel, my putative boss, and so I went, though Sunday mornings offered clear hours to write and I couldn't dance at all. (I wasn't thinking of it at the time, but Kelly Rose was the dancer in the family.) Once there, though, I soon fell under the spell of the teacher, an old vaudevillian no taller than I was, named Yugi. Soon, Isabel and I were shuffle-ball-changing not only Sunday mornings but also Tuesdays after work. The classes afforded ninety-minute reprieves from my awkwardness. I turned out to be deft enough flicking extremities, clicking taps on my heels and toes. My middle was what didn't move. Afterwards, we walked down the empty hall, passing a creative writing class. Through the marbled glass rectangle in the door, we saw drab heads bent over the table. The creative writers looked miserable, while we felt light and flickery from bodily use. When, five years later, Yugi announced his retirement, he recommended another studio but by then, Isabel was preoccupied with a Brooklyn brownstone she and Colin were buying. She promised to give me the lease to her 106th street apartment, a three bedroom higher up, bigger and cheaper than mine. (As in *Help*, she'd once bribed a superintendent ten thousand dollars to get a lease. Her father really had given her the money.)

We all chipped in to buy Yugi a cake and a Borsalino fedora. At the final class, we performed a dance we'd choreographed to a medley of his favorite songs. Isabel couldn't make it; she'd had to trail inspectors through the brownstone. Walking to the elevator alone after that last dance, I paused and then finally knocked on the other door. My Sundays switched then from exuberant clattering with fluttery heartbeats (Yugi counted out the time) to a quiet concentration that often felt like punishment. I had the idea that I could make stories out of the scraps my editors took out of my pieces. They always cut the best parts.

I started two different stories, one about Kelly Rose, my cousin's daughter, visiting me (using outtakes from a feature on treatment for incest victims, which the Sunday magazine editor eviscerated, saying "people don't want to read *that* with their bagels") and another about writing a college essay for my landlord's granddaughter (started with scraps from a piece I did for *Seven Days* about the emergence of private guidance counselors on the Upper East Side.) The workshop had the idea that I should put them together. So I jammed them into the same summer.

At the time the book came out, I was involved in the latest of a series of relationships with extravagantly unavailable men.

I worked on *Help* for three years, bringing in a new chapter every few weeks. Days, I attended my job job. Nights, I wrote. I stayed in the city holidays, while everyone else frittered away time like tossed confetti. Finally, the writing group (which no longer looked uniform or dreary to me) declared it finished. One woman worked as a secretary at a publishing company. I had an offer before it occurred to me to submit to an agent. Like tap dancing, this had only been refreshment from my real work.

The publisher offered me ten thousand dollars. The balance on my J-school loans was $13,890, or $217 a month, and the secretary talked her boss into raising the advance to fifteen. They paid me right away; usually, she told me, they gave half when the writer signed the contract and waited a year to send the rest.

Writing for just the workshop I'd used real names, so much of my work with the book editor was a matter of substitutions. I turned Kelly Rose into Ellen and Stevie into Mike. Isabel became Jessica. In almost every case, the real name fit the person better. I wrote a check to pay off my loans and my budget quickly absorbed the extra monthly $217.

I didn't feel much altered.

So nothing prepared me for the cataclysm. Though I didn't become rich or famous I was nonetheless a different person on the other side of publication. I suppose it didn't take much to change the life I'd had. During my years of writing *Help*, I hadn't once boarded an airplane.

At the time the book came out, I was involved in the latest of a series of relationships with extravagantly unavailable men. The last one, a married Texan, had once toyed with the crenellated bottom of my jeans and told me, there may be women prettier than you, but no one smarter. He had two children and a plump, estranged wife, who had herself fallen in love with her high school sweetheart, a pulmonologist. This wife now planned to become a doctor, too, and had applied to 13 medical schools. Her husband, my putative boyfriend, would have to follow her wherever she was accepted, most likely Puerto Rico, he told me, as I stood at a payphone on Columbus Avenue, outside a bookstore. The whole front window of that now long-vanished shop was filled with copies of my book, the cover a polaroid of me holding swaddled baby

Kelly Rose, in 1970s Michigan. (When I saw that picture multiplied sixty times in the store window, I didn't think of Kelly Rose, though, or of me as a child. I thought, *girl, baby*, and, most of all, *pink*. Why had they made the background pink? Kelly Rose was by then twenty at a small Michigan college.) I put the receiver back onto its metal cradle. Though the Texan and I had just broken up, I felt no pain, no longing. They would catch up to me later, I assumed; I took a breath and walked inside, weaving through a crowd to the podium.

But the pain and sadness never did catch up to overwhelm me; I'd gotten out, that time, scot-free.

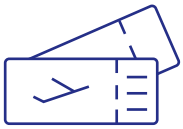
Now, in the place of that bookstore, a luxurious shop sells lingerie.

EVEN BEFORE THE married man ended things over a payphone, I'd understood that I was the caboose of his particular train and I'd auditioned for a low-cost psychoanalysis. Three analysts interviewed me to see if I had promise as a patient for one of their therapists-in-training. After they rejected me, I called one of my assessors. He'd seemed exactly right; worldly, wise, a foot taller than I was and unattractive, a plus, I thought, because I'd read that people fell in love with their analysts, and with him, that seemed unlikely. I asked why they'd rejected me. He paused, then explained that they selected relatively simple cases. When they'd asked, I'd told them the truth: I met few couples I admired and even during those infrequent sightings, I'd rarely thought that I'd like to marry the man, more often, I thought I'd like to *be* him.

Was this what had made mine a complicated case?

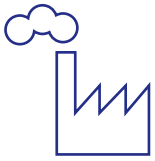
I asked the tall, jowly analyst if he could take me on himself. He said no; he didn't have a sliding payment scale and, even if I could afford his fee, he had no room. But when my book came out, I called again and he gave me an appointment.

Years later, he told me, his wife had been reading *Help*.



THE PUBLISHING COMPANY had no budget for a book tour, but an old friend from J-school arranged for the University of Michigan's English department to invite me to speak. They bought me airplane tickets and I walked through the pretty campus, a little mad at Kelly Rose for not being a student here.

I hadn't told Kelly Rose or her dad that I was in Michigan; Ann Arbor was a five-hour drive from where they lived. It seemed impossible that they would hear about my visit, but Stevie eventually did, from a customer's English-major daughter.



THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF of the women's magazine I worked for gave me a party in her Park Avenue apartment, where I turned out to be as much a matter of interest as the book. Her banker husband and his friends marveled over how people who worked in mills and factories could again and again (stupidly, they thought) vote against their own self-interest. And here I was, an emissary from those benighted places who could perhaps explain. But I hadn't meant to expose my home's vulgarity. Incredible as it now seems, I hadn't actually thought about people *reading* my book while I was writing it, and I certainly never imagined them drawing conclusions about things like education and poverty in Michigan. To me, that background demography was the least of it.

Also, at that time, I didn't yet consider my family poor.

I happened to be one-eighth Oneida, a fact I considered incidental; it had never been a big deal in my family and was, if anything, a source of embarrassment to my grandmother, who disliked the way her cousins on the allotment drank. But once my publisher gleaned the detail, he wouldn't let it go. I was surprised to find it in my biography on the jacket flap. Beginning to understand that, like other things—poverty, for example—which one might wish to hide in Michigan, being an Indian was an asset here, and I'd started to research

In fact, for the book, I'd completely made up the romance with the rabbinical-student-neighbor.

the Oneida Nation. I'd learned that members of its population had been captured and brought as specimens to be exhibited to the London society of Shakespeare's time. Two Oneida women had died on the sea voyage home.

Party guests asked me about characters in my book.

"What had happened to Ellen?"

"Was she based on anyone real?"

"Did she make it to Barnard?"

"Where did I imagine her now?"

I didn't have to imagine. Kelly Rose, the real Ellen, had not "made it" to Barnard. She hadn't attended the University of Michigan either, though she'd had the qualifications; I'd seen to that. She was studying marketing at the small college her father had once dropped out of and worked for a trucking company part-time. As for the me-character (about whom fewer guests asked) there was no happy ending yet either. In fact, for the book, I'd completely made up the romance with the rabbinical-student-neighbor. The person I'd turned into Gaby had only ever been just a friend. Julian was real but he'd left me even earlier

than in the book. I bumped up the breakup to make my narrator less pathetic. I was hopeful for her, I said. I didn't mention that "she" was spending money on a shrink, a shrink who hadn't been interested in her, pre-publication. I wasn't sure how the analysis was going, anyway. In our first session, the tall jowly doctor had summarily dismissed the only person who'd shown any interest in me (another married man, but this one was separated, I'd emphasized, which seemed to me like progress) and when I complained about my mother

The migrant workers, the immigrants who stood at the conveyor belts. I could maybe Dickens them into something.

harping on me—long distance—to wear more dresses, he took her side.

Many women enjoy the feeling of warm air on their bare legs, he said.

But I rode my bike everywhere, I'd argued, requiring me to pull my hair back in a ponytail and to wear pants compatible with a clip.

"You could always walk," the shrink had dryly said.

In fact, this very night, I'd ridden my bike to the Editor-in-Chief's Park Avenue apartment, where my friend Isabel (Jessica) asked, "Will there be a sequel?"

I wasn't sure. I was beginning to understand the value of my hometown; its hundred-and-fifty-year-old paper mill which managed to bust organizers and still wasn't unionized; the canning factories and meat packing plants, our polluted river. The migrant workers, the immigrants who stood at the conveyor belts. I could maybe Dickens them into something.

"Now we just have to find a nice guy for this one," the Editor-in-Chief said to Isabel at the door, quickly looking me up and down, with a frown. I'd put on my helmet and my left pant leg was clipped. She put a finger on the hem of my bulky sweater. She'd huddled with me under an umbrella at Isabel's wedding in the Brooklyn brownstone's garden. I was a *much* bigger challenge, she was thinking.

MY AUNT ESSIE, still alive then, transplanted to Florida and always the celebratory sort, talked her local bookstore owner into contacting my publisher, whom she persuaded to send me down. The bookstore turned out to sell crystals and new age self-actualization tomes. They'd scheduled me the day of the small city's parade and incredibly, the bookstore's employees had constructed a float for me to ride atop, with a ten-foot facsimile of *Help*'s pink cover. Once, a lifetime ago, in Michigan, my girl scout troop made a float, so I knew it was painstaking work to frill the squares of tissue and fit them into chicken wire.

After the slow parade, I delivered a reading to three people, one of whom was the bookstore owner and another, my aunt Essie. As I talked to the one unaccounted-for audience member about how he might sell his own novel, my aunt stood at the register buying *Help*. I tried to stop her, but she insisted. "Now, I'll have to read it," she said, laughing.

"Oh please don't," I said, meaning it.

I stayed the night with my aunt and uncle in a tract house on a golf course. My uncle, whom I'd feared through childhood, was now a diminished being, who, as far as I could tell, spent his day ordering his wife to put on and take off his shirt. One of his arms hovered, bent, by his belly, fingers pedaling the air.

"Oh, that means he wants me to button," Essie said.

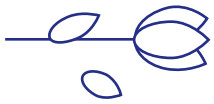
The circumference of his attention had shrunk to his arm span. He looked at me with menace and spoke only to Essie, who sighed as she always had. I'd known these people my whole life, they were my only aunt and uncle, but I couldn't wait to get out of there.

On the drive to the airport, I asked my aunt (nervously but trying not to show it) about Kelly Rose, and she told me she thought she'd "go into something with business" after graduation. She didn't think she was dating anyone special. A sequel to *Help* sounded unlikely. Nothing in Kelly Rose's adult life sparked interest.

I hadn't told Kelly Rose about *Help*. With later books, I sent them to anyone I quoted or wrote about ahead of time, but I hadn't thought to do that. At 34, I'd felt already late and was always rushing.

Saying goodbye, I'd gathered that this was the last time I'd see my uncle but I didn't guess, when I hugged my aunt, feeling the bones in her back at the small airport, that I would never touch her again.

And now Kelly Rose was dead too.



THE AFTERNOON MORE than two decades later, when Stevie finally called me back, I learned that Kelly Rose had died in Florida. Her body would be flown back to Michigan for a service. Her son, Stevie told me as an afterthought, was six years old now. Stevie promised to call when he had a date for the funeral.

The son. Six years old. I vaguely remembered sending a baby gift.

What happened? I asked.

"She took her life," he said. And as soon as he said it, I realized I'd known.

I hoped *Help* didn't have anything to do with this. □

A TALE OF TWO COUPS

Brazilian military occupying downtown Rio de Janeiro, April 2, 1964. Courtesy Brazilian National Archive

Brazil and the United States

by James N. Green

In October 2018, the election of former army captain and extreme-right politician Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil alarmed political observers around the world. Following in the footsteps of his ideological compatriot occupying the White House at the time, Bolsonaro was quickly dubbed by journalists the "Trump of the Tropics." His virulent attacks on Indigenous peoples, environmentalists, and Black, feminist, and LGBT+ activists, among other targeted groups, represented yet another electoral victory for the extreme right. Using fake news, employing a right-wing populist, anti-corruption discourse, and relying on support from evangelical Christians and conservative Catholics, Bolsonaro seemed to imitate Trump's every political position, from Covid-19 vaccination denial to his refusal to wear a mask. Tragically, Brazil followed the United States in the number of pandemic deaths, estimated at more than 600,000.

As the 2022 Brazilian presidential elections approached, former trade-union leader and two-time left-wing president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) surged ahead in the polls. In response, Bolsonaro borrowed another chapter from the Trump playbook: he began criticizing Brazil's electronic voting system and suggested a possible military intervention should he lose the election.

The threat of a military coup was no empty promise. Since 1889, when the Brazilian army ousted Emperor Pedro II and established a republic, the armed forces initiated nine attempted takeovers, five of which were successful. The last military intervention into Brazilian politics took place in 1964, with the explicit support of the US government. It led to a 21-year-long military dictatorship.

When Lula da Silva won the presidential race in October 2022 with a tight two-point margin, Bolsonaro's supporters moved into action to protest the election results. They blocked major highways and camped out in front of barracks throughout the country, demanding that the military intervene and overturn the election results. Despite these articulations, Lula da Silva was duly inaugurated as president on January 1, 2024. A week later, thousands of Bolsonaro's supporters stormed the headquarters of the three branches of government—the presidential palace, National Congress Palace, and seat of the Supreme Court—breaking windows, damaging property, and destroying valuable national treasures. Taking place two years and two days after the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol, the attempted coup d'état was subdued by the new government, which arrested thousands of insurrectionists and restored order to the streets. Subsequent investigations

Bolsonaro's supporters storming the Brazilian Congress, January 8, 2023.
Courtesy Wikicommons

have revealed that sectors of the armed forces were poised to seize power but in large part were halted by international articulations, civil society organizations, and government officials, especially those coming from the Biden White House and the US Congress, warning the military that it would become a global pariah should it overthrow the democratically elected president.

This moment in US foreign policy vis-à-vis recent Brazilian history echoes in reverse the role the Kennedy and Johnson administrations played in supporting Brazilian forces involved in the 1964 military takeover sixty years earlier. The following considers what role Cold War ideologies and practices played in shaping national politics in the largest country of Latin America during the early 1960s and the ways in which the recent rise of the extreme right globally has contributed to a markedly different approach to Brazil by Washington policymakers.

The 1964 military coup d'état

In May 1958, Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek (1955–60), who oversaw the construction of the modernist capital of Brasília, wrote a letter to US president Dwight Eisenhower (1953–60) proposing a comprehensive $10 billion US-sponsored development program for Latin America, named Operation Pan-America. The Republican administration responded by arguing that "trade not aid" was the solution for Latin American socioeconomic problems. Eight months later, a ragtag guerrilla army of Cuban revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro seized the Cuban capital of Havana, toppling the dictatorial government of Fulgencio Batista (1952–59).

The radical left-wing turn of the new Cuban regime alarmed Washington policymakers. In March 1961, recently inaugurated President John F. Kennedy proposed a bold new aid program for the continent, known as the Alliance for Progress. In large part, it was designed to head off communist influence in the region by combining economic aid and development programs with police and military assistance and counter-insurgency training to undermine new guerrilla organizations that had emerged throughout the continent inspired by the victory of the Cuban insurgents.

Among the architects of the Alliance for Progress was Harvard economist Lincoln Gordon, whom Kennedy appointed ambassador to Brazil with the mission of preventing a second Cuban revolution. The mainstream press contributed to a Cold War panic that swept Washington regarding Brazil and Latin America and the Caribbean more generally. To cite one example among many, an October 23, 1960, front-page piece in the *New York Times*, with the alarmist title "Northeast Brazil Poverty Breeds Threat of a Revolt," proclaimed: "The makings of a revolutionary situation are increasingly apparent across the vastness of the poverty-stricken and drought-plagued Brazilian Northeast." A follow-up editorial, "The 'Fidelistas' of Brazil," advocated for a new approach to Latin America: "It is time that the United States took a far more positive part in aiding our neighbors south of the Canal. We can fight the 'Fidelistas' everywhere in Latin America, not with armed force but with the kind of economic aid that proceeds from science and proper understanding."

In a 1964 interview for the Kennedy Presidential Library, Gordon insisted that these articles set the idea of the Brazilian Northeast in the US public's imagination. "They [the articles] talked about this area with its tradition of droughts, great poverty compared with the rest of the country, the development of peasant leagues, Recife as the so-called communist capital of Brazil, etc. The broad impression was an area with twenty-odd million people in it with explosive political and economic and social conditions. . . . I'm sure that most of the American public had never heard of the Brazilian Northeast until these *New York Times* articles appeared in 1960."

Gordon arrived in Brazil in October 1961, at a critical turning point in the country's history. Conservative populist President Jânio Quadros had just resigned after only eight months in office. At the time, voters could split

their ticket. As a result, João Goulart, the left-wing leader of the Brazilian Labor Party, was elected vice president in the 1960 elections, after having served in the same office during the previous Kubitschek administration. Right-wing military officers attempted to prevent Goulart from assuming office, but a divided armed forces led to a compromise agreement allowing him to be sworn in with reduced presidential powers.

On March 31, 1964, the military rebellion took place, overtly backed by US policymakers. Rebellious generals marched on Rio de Janeiro.

At first, the Kennedy administration adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward Goulart. Eleven months later, Ambassador Gordon, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Richard Goodwin, and President Kennedy had made up their minds about the new government. In a White House meeting of July 30, 1962, Gordon said, "I think one of our important jobs is to strengthen the spine of the military. To make clear, discreetly, that we are not necessarily hostile to any kind of military action whatsoever if it's clear that the reason for the military action is . . ." The President finished his sentence, "against the left." Gordon continued: "He [Goulart] is giving the damn country away to the . . ." Again, Kennedy finished, "Communists." A few moments later, Goodwin commented: "We may very well want them [the Brazilian military] to take over at the end of the year, if they can."[1]

Although Gordon, Goodwin, and Kennedy may have wished for Goulart's rapid demise, it would take longer than they anticipated for the Brazilian generals to coalesce into a coherent group capable of staging a successful coup. In the meantime, Washington pursued a policy to encourage anti-Goulart forces that was wrapped in a Cold War framework in which any progressive or nationalistic government was seen as one step away from a communist takeover. US covert funding of the political opposition and overt signals to the right bolstered those favoring a military coup and were part of a plan to form a countervailing support wall to shore up the country against the supposed imminent fall of Brazil to communism.

In late 1963, Goulart turned to more nationalist postures to gain political support at home. In December, he issued a decree ordering a review of all government concessions in the mining industry, raising the fear that the government might nationalize foreign interests. The next month, he issued the regulations that enacted a profit-remittance law. Finally, at a massive March 13 rally, Goulart announced a set of measures, including a limited land reform and the expropriation of some foreign oil refineries. Gordon watched the public demonstration that afternoon on television, picking up the final speeches on the radio as he hurried to the airport for a flight back to Washington for special White House consultations.

On March 31, 1964, the military rebellion took place, overtly backed by US policymakers. Rebellious generals marched on Rio de Janeiro. Goulart flew to Brasília, then to his country estate in the south. His support among the armed forces crumbled. Left-wing, union, and other backers did not lead a coordinated or effective resistance. The Brazilian Congress declared that he had abandoned his office. President Johnson quickly recognized a provisional government. Two days later, Goulart slipped into Uruguay. The generals had come to power.

But instead of the armed forces intervening in politics for a brief time—to eliminate alleged corruption and communist influence in the Goulart government and restore democracy—five four-star generals ruled the country for the next 21 years. Yes, they retained some democratic institutions, such as political parties and a weakened Congress. But they also arrested left-wing activists, increased censorship, limited democratic freedoms, and, in a turn toward more repressive measures in late 1968, suspended habeas corpus and instituted the systematic state-sponsored torture of oppositionists.

An 11-year-long transition to democratic rule (1974–85) was in part accelerated by the human-rights policies of President Jimmy Carter (1977–80), student-led demonstrations demanding democratic freedom, and a series of labor strikes in Greater São Paulo in 1978–80, commanded by union leader Lula da Silva. This process and the subsequent thirty years in which political leaders and civil society organizations consolidated democracy were fraught with economic and political instability, the impeachment of two presidents, the imprisonment of Lula da Silva on charges of corruption, and the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

Organized civil society and the 2023 attempted coup

ON DECEMBER 1, 2018, 200 Brazilians, US-based academics, and others founded the US Network for Democracy in Brazil (USNDB) at Columbia University Law School. Spurred on by the prospect of four years of right-wing rule in Brazil (after two years of Trump's presidency), academics and Brazilian activists were motivated to denounce Bolsonaro's policies while simultaneously advocating for the guarantee of democracy in Brazil. During the gathering, a motion was unanimously approved to establish an office in the nation's capital to address issues related to Brazil. The Washington Brazil Office (WBO) was founded in 2020 and launched officially in January 2022.

During his four years in office, Trump had managed to polarize the US body politic. His denial of the 2020 electoral results and the attempted coup d'état had shocked the world. When it seemed that Bolsonaro intended to follow Trump's strategy, panic spread to democratic

forces within Brazil and abroad. In this regard, key members of the Biden administration understood the danger that a similar extreme right in Brazil posed to ensuring free and fair Brazilian elections. Already in 2021, the White House had begun sending behind-the-scenes messages through the CIA to the Brazilian armed forces, indicating that the Biden administration would not support any attempt to subvert the democratic process in Brazil. When Bolsonaro suggested publicly on multiple occasions that the armed forces might need to protect the nation against possible electoral fraud and repeated his lack of confidence in the electronic voting system to a gathering of ambassadors in Brasília, the White House and State Department issued public statements affirming their confidence in the Brazilian democratic process and the country's ability to carry out free and fair elections. Given the fact that Lula da Silva led in all respected polls in 2022, this meticulously on-message campaign by US government officials clearly signaled to Bolsonaro that should Lula da Silva win the election, as observers were predicting, the Biden administration would oppose any military or civilian effort to overturn the results. In other words, despite Washington's support of the 1964 coup almost sixty years earlier, the Biden administration, along with leaders around the world, was affirming its support for Brazilian democracy.

Despite Washington's support of the 1964 coup almost sixty years earlier, the Biden administration, along with leaders around the world, was affirming its support for Brazilian democracy.

Nevertheless, the escalation of anti-democratic rhetoric of the Brazilian right, violence against Lula da Silva's supporters, and Bolsonaro's not-so-subtle overtures to the armed forces alarmed Brazilian human rights and civil society organizations, including those affiliated with the WBO. In response, the WBO organized a delegation of representatives from 18 member organizations to visit Washington in July 2022 to talk to members of Congress, representatives of the White House and State Department, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights about the on-going threat to democracy in Brazil. The mission called on US officials to "inform themselves about the situation in Brazil, where the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, calls into question the electoral system and the results of the polls, attacking the independence of the Powers, through actions directed against the Justice Electoral Court and the Federal Supreme Court."

In the following months, the WBO organized the publication of an international statement in support of democracy in Brazil. It supported a group of 31 representatives and eight senators, who sent a letter on September 9, 2022, to President Biden asking him to make "unequivocally clear to Bolsonaro, his government, and security forces that Brazil will find itself isolated from the US and the international community of democracies if there are attempts to subvert the country's electoral process." As the delegation to Washington had requested, President Biden called to congratulate President Lula da Silva on his electoral victory less than an hour after the official results were announced.

When Bolsonaro's supporters stormed the centers of power in Brazil a week after President Lula da Silva's inauguration, the Biden administration immediately issued a statement condemning the attempt coup d'état. Three days later, sixty US and Brazilian lawmakers released a joint declaration in which they condemned the "authoritarian and anti-democratic actors of the extreme right." They also asserted, "It is no secret that far-right agitators in Brazil and the US are coordinating efforts," citing meetings between Brazilian Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, the defeated president's son, and former advisers to Donald Trump, such as Jason Miller and Steve Bannon, who, they wrote in a January 11, 2023, press release, "encouraged Bolsonaro to contest the results of the elections in Brazil."

Whereas in 1964 the Johnson administration had supported the overthrow of the Goulart government, this time the Biden administration and many members of the US Congress were on the right side of history, in large part because of the traumatic experiences of both Trump's presidency and the January 6 insurrection that almost annulled the results of the 2020 US presidential elections, but also in part because of the pressure by Brazilian civil society organizations. Despite divergent geopolitical and economic interests that may exist between the two countries, the threat of a near-fascist takeover in the United States created sensibilities for US foreign policymakers in which practice coincided with rhetoric. Given the long-term close relationship between the Brazilian military and its US counterpart, the messages emanating from Washington were influential in pressuring a sector of the armed forces to pause before committing themselves to a coup to overturn the electoral results. Although Brazilian civil society organizations and their supporters in the United States had no direct channels to Biden's inner circles to influence or shape its policy regarding the elections, its articulations in Congress leading up to the elections certainly reinforced the White House's diplomacy.

In 1964, the US government backed the Brazilian military, which in the name of democracy ruled over an authoritarian regime for 21 years. In 2022–23, the US administration and key members of Congress got it right. □

1 Timothy Naftali, et al, eds., *The Presidential Recordings, John F. Kennedy: The Great Crises*, vol. 1, (W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), pp. 18–19.

NO WAY OUT

Russia's strategic nightmare in Ukraine

by Michael Kimmage

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION has stated its core war aim repeatedly. It is Russia's strategic failure. Such failure is not equivalent to Russia's outright defeat, which the United States and its allies cannot bring about. The United States is not at war with Russia, which possesses a sizable military and an immense nuclear arsenal. Strategic failure, a more elusive notion than defeat, must amount to more than Russia's day-to-day battlefield setbacks. Neither is it Ukrainian troops marching to Moscow, setting the Ukrainian flag atop the Kremlin, and ending the war once and for all.

As a turn of phrase, "strategic failure" has been atmospherically correct at times. Russia conspicuously failed to take Kyiv in the opening weeks of the war and was forced to retreat in northern Ukraine. The Ukrainian military took the initiative in the fall of 2022, one of the war's most dramatic turns, reclaiming large swathes of territory around the city of Kharkiv. The Kremlin's strategic failure could amount—retrospectively—to its hubristic decision to wage war against a determined adversary; to Russia's inability to achieve its stated objectives, such as the annexation of four southern Ukrainian *oblasts*; and the Russian army's well-documented brutality, which motivated Ukrainians to fight and non-Ukrainians to support Ukraine.

Yet, over time, Russia's strategic failure, either as an end state for Western policy or as a metric for assessing this policy, has made less and less intuitive sense. For Russia to fail, the Kremlin must believe its war effort to be a failure, or some significant portion of the Russian population must believe this, exerting political pressure on Russia's president, Vladmir Putin, to end the war. This is not yet the case, and Russia has shown real ingenuity in perpetuating its hapless war. For Putin, the war is too big for Russia to fail explicitly, to pull back, or to admit publicly to errors in the fighting of it. In the spring and summer of 2024, momentum has been on the Russian side. Ukraine's counter-offensive—in the summer of 2023—did little to bring Ukraine closer to victory. It will be a long time before Ukraine has the resources to go on the offensive again.

Failure is in the eye of the beholder. Russia may well spend years, and possibly decades, trying to spin strategic success or the veneer of strategic success from this war. If so, it would not be the first formidable military power to cling to an enervating, counterproductive war—out of self-delusion, out of stubbornness,

or out of the gambler's conviction that by rolling the dice repeatedly, good fortune will one day materialize.

Putin's war might more accurately be framed as a strategic nightmare for Russia. Enormous incentives exist within the Russian political system not to characterize the war in these terms. It is a truth nobody in the Kremlin can admit, but that does not make it any less of a truth. Russia's ongoing nightmare has a military and an economic component. The war is also a nightmare for Russian statecraft.

Western policymakers need to have a big-picture understanding of Russia's strategic nightmare. Without this understanding, the inevitable bad days and bad months experienced by Ukraine will weigh too heavily. Without this understanding, support will waver for a war that at best will be grinding and difficult for Ukraine and its partners. Without this understanding, Putin's attempts to spin the war as a Russian triumph are likely to gain traction. Without this understanding, Ukraine and the West will focus too much of their attention on a victory that is out of reach, while missing chances to exploit the ongoing strategic nightmare that Putin imposed on Russia on February 24, 2022, when his full-scale invasion began. For analytical clarity and for sound policy, the daily headlines and the minutia of the war need to be placed against the broader context of Russia's self-willed strategic nightmare.

THE WAR HAS LED Russia into a military trap. The Kremlin cannot tie its military actions to any viable political program for the territory Russia currently occupies and for the territory Russia may occupy in the future. Had Russia taken Kyiv in the first few weeks of the war, this story would likely look very different. Absent the decapitation of the Ukrainian government, Russia must contend with the reality that Ukraine has a government, that this government will endure, and that the war has given it high levels of support from the population. Because Ukraine has a working government and because Kyiv has a global coalition of countries that are offering assistance, Ukraine remains in control of most of its territory (around eighty percent) and is able to contest territory that is under Russian control.

Russia, which may not struggle to hold territory in Ukraine, will be unable to turn this territory into a thriving imperial periphery. Russia can extract some resources from the territory it occupies; this it has already done. To make its Ukrainian colony economically vital, however, Russia would have to end the war on its terms, which it cannot do. With an unended war, Russia runs the risk of losing territory or of having the territory under its dominion attacked from without. For Russia, Crimea is a microcosm of this dilemma. Crimea has been a Russian colony from 2014 to 2022, a treasured imperial possession that helped Russia to project military power into the Black Sea and into Southern Ukraine. Now it is mired in a devastating war, and, having become more of a liability than an asset for Russia, Crimea is regularly under Ukrainian attack.

WITH ALMOST MATHEMATICAL PRECISION, RUSSIA'S MILITARY ACTIONS IN UKRAINE HAVE BEEN POLITICALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

With almost mathematical precision, Russia's military actions in Ukraine have been politically counterproductive. Russia's targeting of Ukrainian civilians has deprived Russia of any leverage in Ukraine that is not military force or that is not backed up by military force, undermining what was among the Kremlin's most important pre-invasion war aims—control over the Ukrainian polity or the construction of a Russian-led polity within Ukraine. Beyond Ukraine, although political cycles run their course and support for Ukraine waxes and wanes, the general trajectory is toward the integration of Ukraine into Western security structures. Another of the Kremlin's most important pre-invasion war aims was to sever Ukraine from the West. The war has had the opposite effect.

Russia cannot resolve these political conundrums simply by applying a greater degree of military force, not least because these conundrums have been created (in part) by the misapplication of military force. Regardless of the square miles Russia can claim to control in Ukraine, Russia will forever be in the political wilderness in Ukraine.

THE WAR HAS NOT been an economic catastrophe for Russia. Sanctions have not brought Russia to its knees, and instead of isolation the war has witnessed new forms of global engagement from Russia. As a result, Russia has experienced modest economic growth since 2022. It has found ample markets for Russian gas and oil, and materiel flows into Russia, fueling the Russian war machine—through conventional trade, through "roundabout" trade and through smuggling. Russia is outproducing the West when it comes to artillery shells. In partnership with Iran, Russia has also been innovative in drone warfare. Russia has been dynamic in the domain of defense-industrial capacity. The production and purchase of weapons and the humming along of the Russian economy have kept Russia in the war.

Funding the war effort and constructing a strong Russian economy are not the same thing. Rather than the war serving the larger needs of the Russian economy, the Russian economy has been reshaped to serve the needs of the war. Putin can justify his break with the West as Russia's liberation from Western decline and decadence. In reality, Putin has cut off Russia from its natural trading

partners in Europe, depriving Russian companies of access to Western markets and Western investment. The costs of normalizing relations with the West will be exceptionally high for Russia, nothing short of war termination, a Russian departure from Ukraine, the paying of reparations to Ukraine and the prosecution of Russian political and military leaders for war crimes. If domestic Russian politics cannot bear these costs, Russia will be economically alienated from Europe in perpetuity.

Russia's wartime economy carries great risks. Government spending has supercharged the Russian economy. Hundreds of thousands of young men have been put into uniform, and factories are running overtime to meet the demands of an overstretched military. Unemployment is low, and for most Russians their quality of life has either not declined or it has improved since February 2022. Yet the economy has grown dependent on war, locking Russia into cycles of militarism that may extend beyond Ukraine. The possibility that Russia's economy will overheat, that inflation will run amok, is non-trivial, and Russia's globalized economy is hardly free from potential exogenous shocks, which for Russia would most likely be a dip in energy prices. The war, which is enormously expensive, has diminished Russia's economic resilience.

A third element of Russia's strategic nightmare concerns Putin's statecraft. It is an ironic turn of events, because Putin rose to power as a *gosudarstevenik*, a "statist" obsessed with stabilizing and empowering the Russian state. Putin's preoccupation with history runs in this direction—his admiration for Peter the Great, the architect of modern Russian statehood, and for Pyotr Stolypin, the administrative genius of late imperial Russia. In the Soviet Union, Putin had served the Soviet state by working in the KGB. In the Putinist mythology, Putin rescued Russia from the state collapse that had manifested once in 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and then again in the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, whose "era" could be made synonymous with chaos. As president, Putin loves the image of himself as a statesman, a transformative leader who is returning Russia to its proper greatness.

Though from a global purview Putin is not a pariah, his statecraft has been baffling. Prior to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia had a wide range of diplomatic relationships. This gave Moscow quite a bit of flexibility and the chance to play other countries off each other—Turkey off the United States, Israel off Iran, India off China. Russia gained leverage from being in the middle. Situated between the wealth of Asia and the wealth of Europe, Russia had the potential to be between East and West, North and South, a bridge or a crossroads among nations. The war destroyed this arrangement, pushing Russia into the arms of North Korea and Iran, making Russia acutely dependent on China, reducing the efficacy of Russian diplomacy in the South Caucasus and in the Middle East. The war is a geopolitical albatross around Russia's neck.

The essence of statecraft is the art of building up future capacity. This cannot come from the augmentation of military alone. Future state capacity in Russia will derive from the buoyancy of its economy and its society, which will itself derive from a myriad of factors. If Russia can assimilate new ideas, if it can generate and reward new ideas, if it can be a place of creativity where business and technology are concerned, its economy will expand and so too will the clout of the Russian state. By this standard, Russia was not competitive with Europe, with the United States, or with China before the war, and by detaching Russia from the West and by driving talented young Russians into exile the war has radically degraded Russia's long-term competitiveness. Had Putin sought a method for gradually making Russia hidebound and stagnant, he could hardly surpass his 2022 invasion of Ukraine. His war has been an act of reverse statesmanship.

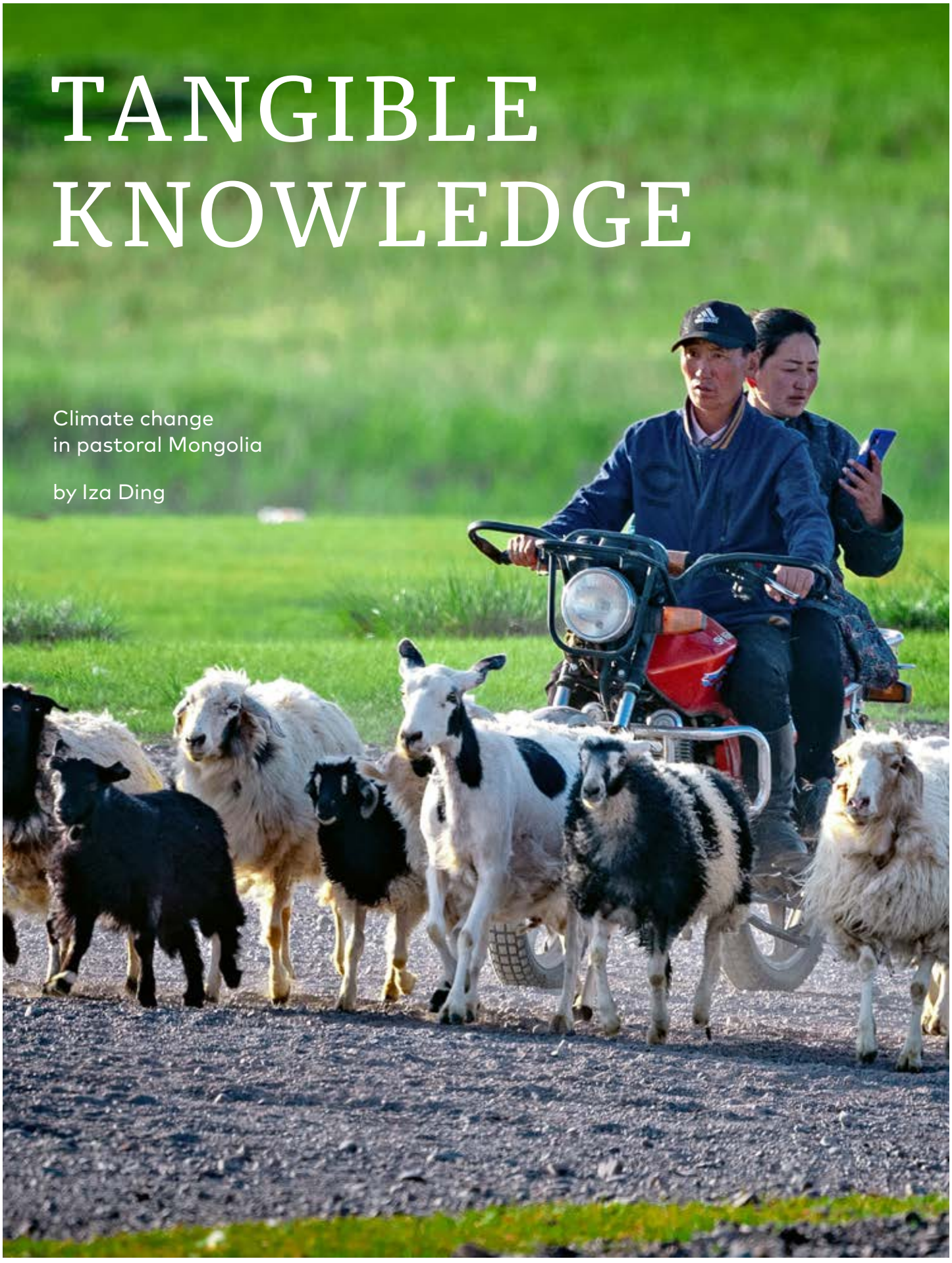
HAD PUTIN SOUGHT A METHOD FOR GRADUALLY MAKING RUSSIA HIDEBOUND AND STAGNANT, HE COULD HARDLY SURPASS HIS 2022 INVASION OF UKRAINE.

RUSSIA'S WAR-INDUCED strategic nightmare underscores two policy priorities for the West. The first is not to furnish Russia with a way out, not to indulge the dubious thesis that all wars end with negotiated settlements and not to despair at Ukraine's chances for survival. Ukraine has already proven that it will survive. A hasty negotiated settlement is worse than no settlement at all, and unless it were to fundamentally transform its strategic posture Russia would use any reprieve in the war to regroup, rearm, and reinvade. The second—and related—priority is patience. The only country that can defeat Russia in its war against Ukraine is Russia. This eventual defeat will be Russia's failure to achieve its military and political objectives, and it will follow from the fact that for Russia the war is futile. More precisely, Russia's defeat will equal the *realization* by Russians in power and not in power that the war is futile for Russia. Only with this realization, whenever it comes, will an end to the war begin to materialize. □

TANGIBLE KNOWLEDGE

Climate change
in pastoral Mongolia

by Iza Ding



Herder couple on their morning rounds, Ogii Nuur, Mongolia, July 2022. Photo by the author.

OYUNAA IS A TINY lady. She is south of five feet and north of her seventies. She runs a restaurant called Tsainy Gazar (Tea Station) out of her home, which sits in the Argalant Soum Stop Center on Saddle Road highway. In June 2023, my friend Tsermaa and I visited Oyunaa on our way to Hustai National Park, one hundred kilometers west of the Mongolian capital city of Ulaanbaatar, where we've been conducting our respective field research.

We enter Tsainy Gazar at an early hour. Oyunaa pokes her head out of the kitchen, then quickly retreats into her chambers, mumbling that her hair and clothes weren't right. Twenty minutes later, she reemerges with freshly painted eyebrows, pink lips, gold earrings, updone hair, and a long white floral dress. Oyunaa waltzes around her restaurant—her living room—effortlessly, shuffling things around, pulling chairs over next to the long dining table, planting before us bowls of mare yogurt—a typical Mongolian treat for guests—and an even bigger bowl of sugar to go with our yogurt. A Genghis Khan portrait presides over the entire room. Other than the great Khan, there are no men in the house.

Oyunaa's unassuming size and demeanor belies the fact that she is one of the most powerful people in Argalant Soum. (Soum is the Mongolian equivalent of a US county or Chinese city, the administrative unit below province-level. There are 331 soums in Mongolia.) She is a leader of one of the soum's eight herder groups. Her herder group, 75 strong—45 male and 30 female—roams over the rangeland in the White Mountains. She is the central node in Argarlant Soum's social web, the conveyer belt of information, the organizer of social and political events, and the solver of what social scientists call "collective action problems." Her little restaurant operates as the Mongolian People's Party's campaign headquarters during election time. Her political role? "I tell people who to vote for."

I perform my submission to this tiny matriarch by downing the entire bowl of mare yogurt and fried mutton *huushurs* prepared by her helpers. Thus commences our conversation.

Oyunaa hails from the northern province of Khuvsgul, on the Russian border. Her parents were herders. She started helping them even before elementary school and developed the ability to identify every sheep in the herd and to locate foreign sheep that got accidentally mixed up in their family's herd.

As a teenager, Oyunaa moved to Erdenet, the second largest city in Mongolia. Erdenet appeared on the map in the 1970s, when copper deposits were discovered in the area. Oyunaa worked there at a wood factory. When communism fell, the wood factory closed its doors. Oyunaa moved to Argalant to become a herder, acquiring thirty cows and one hundred sheep and goats over time. She also married and started a big family.

Life was difficult with seven kids. "There was nothing but salt, flour, and rice." But Oyunaa is a survivor. She was the first in the area to start a restaurant business, first to embrace intensive livestock husbandry, and first to experiment with agriculture—growing cucumber, tomato, and green peppers in her ever-expanding greenhouse. She is valued for her fighting spirit and was selected as the leader of her herder group in 2010.

FOR THE PAST FEW summers, I have been traveling to Mongolia to study its pastoral population. I forayed into this "exotic" land through a mix of serendipitous reading, whimsical adventurism, and perhaps the same kind of orientalist expectations that direct many others here.

Everything I subsequently learned has been unexpected. Mongolia has made many of the theories and concepts I've been teaching students in political science courses in the United States seem absurd. I have been overwhelmed by the economic, social, and environmental precariousness that challenges this otherwise vibrant democracy landlocked between Russia and China.

One of those challenges is climate change. There is absolutely no question, to any scholar or lay observer, that climate change is disproportionally affecting Mongolia. Mongolia's rates of warming far exceed the global average, causing stress to its fragile ecosystems and to all those who rely on nature for their livelihood. Mongolia ranks fifty-ninth on the University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index (ND-GAIN)—a surprisingly strong ranking given actual vulnerabilities observed on the ground. But its "Human Habitat" score, defined as "a country's vulnerability of human living conditions to climate change," ranks one-hundred-seventy-fifth out of 192 countries measured.

The most vulnerable population in Mongolia is its herders. Despite rapid urbanization and the rise of mining, herding remains an important source of subsistence for much of the country's population. Animal products constitute ten percent of the nation's exports.

Like every herder I talk to, Oyunaa recounts the deterioration of environmental conditions in recent years. There have been droughts and floods in succession. And then there are the *dzuds*: extreme weather events, usually a frigid winter followed by an arid summer, which decimate livestock.

"We have less rain, but more cold rain. Summer is shorter: spring shifts to fall instead of summer, which is the good season because it allows grass to grow."

Herders develop an amazing ability to feel the environment around them. Even while they sit with me inside their yurts, half of their attention would be outside with the sky and the animals. Often, they pause the interview to check on a sudden gust, to milk the horses at the appropriate hour, or to nudge a cow that refuses to cross the road. Years of working with the land and animals has gifted them the ability to know exactly which plant is supposed to grow during which week of the year and at what temperature. They can describe the right shape of water flow in the rivers and how it has changed. They regale

me with stories of snowstorms, of animals perishing from bitter cold while standing, and of sheep and goats so hungry they resorted to eating rodents.

Yet what astonished me the most during these interviews is that almost no one was able to answer the simple, direct question I ventured into the Mongolian steppe to ask: "Can you tell me about climate change?"

Wait, what?

Let me repeat this. When I asked herders if they could tell me about climate change, or if they had heard of climate change, their answer was usually a head shake.

A typical conversation would go as follows. I ask the interviewee: "Can you tell me what you know about climate change?" The answer: "I don't know much." Minutes later, the interviewee says: "We used to move three to four times a year. But nowadays the climate is bad, so we move more times."

Another question I raised with every interviewee was: "Have you heard of the Paris Agreement?" Only two people said yes to this question. One is a biologist at the Hustai National Park. The other is Oyunaa, our diminutive matriarch.

A seasoned interviewer double checks every "yes" they get, which is what I do with Oyunaa. I ask her if she could tell me about the Paris Agreement. Only then does she suddenly become quiet for the first time in our conversation. I realize that Oyunaa in fact has not heard of the Paris Agreement and only said yes because a powerful person like her shouldn't have anything they don't know or can't do. As we all sometimes do, her original "yes, I know" is to save face.

So how come a population that is most vulnerable to climate change doesn't know anything about it, or doesn't acknowledge its severity?

My political science training tells me that it's because Mongolia is poor. As a college student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, I studied with the late Ronald Inglehart, who was as supportive as he was brilliant. Ron and his colleague Christian Welzel wrote a book called *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), in which they argue that as societies get richer, their dominant values change from "survival" to "post-material," or "self-expressive," which makes people demand democracy.

One of these "self-expression values" that follows economic development is environmentalism. Inglehart and Welzel write: "In most societies, the Green activists are mainly post-materialists, and it seems unlikely that Green parties or environmental movements would have emerged without the intergenerational cultural changes that gave rise to a postindustrial worldview that reflects an increased awareness of ecological risks."

Mongolia was not mentioned in the book, but according to the logic of modernization theory, herders in Mongolia lack knowledge about climate change because they are focused on surviving. Their cluelessness is in spite of their own vulnerability to climate change.

But are the herders really clueless? If so, why is it that over and over again I hear:

"Rangeland is degrading."

"Weather is worsening."

". . . stronger and more frequent winds."

"Plants are becoming more sensitive to parasites."

"August was summer and now August is fall."

"There is less rain in the spring and more rain in the fall. So livestock cannot fatten up because there is not enough grass in the summer."

"What will happen to young herders?"

I doubt many college-educated liberals living in the OECD world voting for green parties could get so detailed and empirical about "climate change" as these Mongolian herders do. Herders know better than anybody else about the climbing of temperature, the drying of rangeland, the flooding of rivers, the dwindling of plant and animal species, and the unfolding collapse of ecosystems. It didn't take me much time to realize that it's not that herders are oblivious or nonchalant about the consequences of climate change; it's just that they have never heard the phrases "climate change," or "global warming," or "renewable energy"—all foreign jargon translated from English.

Herders know better than anybody else about the climbing of temperature, the drying of rangeland, the flooding of rivers, the dwindling of plant and animal species, and the unfolding collapse of ecosystems.

After this realization, I had numerous conversations with colleagues conducting fieldwork in the Global South, and they shared with me similar observations. People who are frontline witnesses of climate change are not indifferent to climate change because they are unenlightened. They just don't talk and think about climate change using the same jargon that Western scholars do.

When we approach herders with standardized survey questions such as "should the environment or the economy be given priority?," no answer makes sense because the question makes no sense. For many of the most immediate victims of climate change, the economy is the environment, and the postmaterial is material. No wonder the World Value Survey shows that people in Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan care less about the environment than Americans, Brits, and Canadians. To conclude from this that rich nations, which tend to be English-speaking and better educated, care more because they are more liberal and enlightened is nothing short of an intellectual disaster.

I WALKED AWAY FROM these interviews feeling that something is off with our master narratives in social science in general and in climate-change communication in particular. I started to ponder what exactly "knowledge" is, and how we actually know if one person is more knowledgeable than another. In my past research, I've argued for the importance of education to encourage concern for environment degradation and climate change. But what exactly does education do? What exactly are we teaching? Education gives people knowledge, but it also gives them the lexicon that helps them appear as if they are in the know. But do they really know, or do they just know exactly what to say to appear as if they know to others in the know?

This is not just my sentimental musing. It has real-world implications. It shapes our predilection toward "the Global South" and our "policy solutions" for their problems. I can't repeat enough the complaints I've heard about international experts and organizations in Ulaanbaatar, sometimes by people who conduct research for these international experts. It's not uncommon to witness situations where the teacher should in fact be the student, the enlightened who most need enlightenment.

Most importantly, if there is a problem, what's the solution? How to resist the master narratives in social science without resisting science itself? This is perhaps the hardest question for scholars with postmodern sensibilities. Deconstruction is the necessary first step, but what follows? Surely (hopefully) nobody is advocating the abandonment of the scientific method, or the total obliteration of standardized surveys, or of any abstraction whatsoever, or of language that is clear rather than obscure.

For those who believe that there is such a thing as objective truth, how do we improve our methods and epistemology to get us closer to, instead of farther away from, that truth? That is the question for my generation of responsible social scientists. □

SNOWMAN

The art of evanescence

by Amy Waldman

IN 1989, THE SWISS artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss mounted a cheeky challenge to nature's iron rule that snow, in temperatures above freezing, must melt. At the Römerbrücke thermal power station in Saarbrücken, Germany, they encased a snowman in a glass vitrine that was also a freezer. The energy generated by the plant kept the snowman—actually a copper mold of three balls, eyes and a mouth, around which humidity pumped into the freezer condenses into a semblance of snow—cold.

As Fischli observed, a snowman is a "sculpture that almost anyone can make," but not one that anyone can sustain. "The power plant serves as the snowman's lifeline, and in turn the artwork becomes completely dependent on it for survival," the artists wrote. Dependency was one theme of the work, as was the tension between the natural and the artificial. What *Snowman* was not intended to be was any kind of statement about climate change, which was just coming onto the public radar then. As Fischli has pointed out, the power required to keep the snowman from melting meant that its very existence added emissions to the atmosphere.

In 2016, *Snowman* was revived. It toured the US, making stops at modern art museums in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, now hooked up to routine electrical supply rather than a power plant. Much else had changed since its first appearance. Weiss, for one, had passed away. The evidence of climate catastrophe was now incontrovertible. And it was clear that one casualty of warming temperatures would be snow. Across the Northern Hemisphere (and in the Andes), snowfall and snow cover have been declining for fifty years, precipitously so in the last decade. How, then, do we think about—approach—*Snowman* today? For without snow, a snowman is no longer a sculpture that anyone can make.

THERE ARE NOW at least four editions of *Snowman*, including one at Fondation Beyeler in Switzerland. (There, its power source is solar, the sun protecting the snowman from the sun.) In reliquaries, holy relics are sometimes kept behind glass. Is *Snowman*, behind glass, a holy relic? These days it can feel that way. I imagine making a pilgrimage to sit with it, maybe in winter, to see the encased *Snowman* set in snow. Or is it—is snow—now a commodity, like a precious metal? Does *Snowman*'s value, in a market sense, increase as snow itself goes away? Does its emotional value increase?

On the terrace at the Art Institute of Chicago, when the thermometer hit 96 degrees, *Snowman*'s facial features sagged a bit. "Some sensitive viewers expressed compassion," the artists noted in a monograph. *Snowman* is mineral, inanimate, yet it elicits compassion. (Darker emotions, too: "When I first brought him out, there was sun on his belly, and I felt sadistic, but that was part of the fun," Fischli said in a public talk. "The puddles of condensation I especially liked . . . that there was an electrical wire running through the puddles.") The need for care—the snowman's dependency on us to stay "alive"—is part of the point, as Fischli himself has said. The nature of that care calls to mind the attachments people form with robot dogs or companions, and also the lack of care we've shown the natural world.

When *Snowman* is displayed, conservators must regularly clear snow from the mouth and restore its expression "to the artists' specifications," as one article put it. The snowman requires care both to stay alive (the distilled water must be refilled, the electrical connection maintained) but also, in the maintenance of its smile, to remain itself. Recognizable. That dutifully maintained expression on *Snowman*'s face is mysterious,

Peter Fischli / David Weiss, *Snowman* (1987/2019), Copper, aluminum, glass, water, and coolant system. AP 1/1 + Ed. of 2. 218×128×165 cm; object approx. 130×ø70 cm. Collection Fondation Beyeler, Riehen. Courtesy the artists; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich/Vienna; Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles/New York; and Sprüth Magers, Berlin/London/New York/Los Angeles © the artists

an almost Mona Lisa smile. (Perhaps this was another Fischli/Weiss joke.)

It appears benign, yet snowmen once represented terror and menace, or symbols of authority meant to be destroyed by pelted snowballs. "The white cold shadow of your soul," was the poet Delmore Schwartz's phrase. Bob Eckstein, author of *The History of the Snowman*, describes the Miracle of 1511, in Brussels, where snowmen and snowwomen were shaped into politically charged and pornographic scenes. The morphing of snowmen into cuddly caricatures is a recent turn, arguably an American one. In 1969, "Frosty the Snowman," a song from the 1950s, became a beloved movie, one we watched every December during my California childhood. Eckstein finds Frosty a "bland, anodyne" obscuring of the snowman's true history of sex and violence, and I can't argue. But Frosty troubles me, these days, for a different reason, which is his immortality. All kinds of plot convolutions take place to ensure that he doesn't melt, that children don't see him melt. Or they do—he turns into a puddle, leaving Karen, his child friend, heartbroken—but then he is resurrected. He hasn't forsaken us. He won't.

In this magical thinking, this blithe insistence on immortality, I see a clue to our current predicament. The refusal to accept that death is inevitable seems of a piece with the unwillingness to believe that continuing to burn fossil fuels would necessarily raise temperatures, or that the consequences of that rise would be anything but disastrous. In each case, there is an implicit insistence that the laws of nature don't apply to us. Does celebrating your own exceptionalism, as Americans have been taught to do, also mean deluding yourself that exceptions will be made for you?

Among the institutions that purchased *Snowman*, reportedly for a "six-figure sum," is the Queensland Art Gallery, in Brisbane, Australia, a place where snow almost never falls. The museum's website describes the snowman, squashed into its case, as being "far from its European ancestry," and also "perfect for selfies"—which seems, these days, to be art's highest purpose. According to one essay about the acquisition, the work speaks not to climate change but to climate defiance. *Snowman*, we are told, is "comically out of place in subtropical Brisbane; many Australians will have never seen a snowman in real life. Yet his presence is no less plausible than the Gallery's year round air-conditioning. If we can buy flowers and fruit out of season and remain at a comfortable 23 degrees Celsius all year round, why not have a snowman in summer?"

Perhaps we celebrate the technical aptitude that will allow us to replace what we've lost—in fact to improve what we've lost, because now it comes with no limits of season or place—in order to blunt our grief at what we've destroyed.

Why not, indeed? Why not tell ourselves we're not losing anything, but rather gaining access to snow at anytime, anywhere? These days it snows more reliably in Los Angeles at Christmas than it does in New York, thanks to artificial snow that falls promptly on the hour at an outdoor shopping mall. Never mind that snow has been, for humans, not just a substance but an experience, of anticipation, surprise, delight, terror and awe, all charged by the unpredictable, uncontrollable process of water crystallizing out of our sight then falling gently (or frantically) to earth.

Perhaps we celebrate the technical aptitude that will allow us to replace what we've lost—in fact to *improve* what we've lost, because now it comes with no limits of season or place—in order to blunt our grief at what we've destroyed. In Basel, which is home to Fondation Beyeler, temperatures this February were 15 degrees above the norm. Temperatures everywhere were above the norm: it was the hottest February on record, just as each of the eight months before were the hottest on record and each of the four months since. Under these conditions, which are the conditions of our foreseeable future, making a snowman truly will require the Fischli/Weiss recipe: coolant, electric power, distilled water, a vitrine. The only conception possible will be artificial.

In *Doppelganger*, her exploration of doubles, including her own, Naomi Klein writes: "For centuries, doppelgangers have been understood as warnings or harbingers. When reality starts doubling… it often means that something important is being ignored or denied. . . ." And elsewhere: "In stories about doubles, twins, and imposters, it is often the case that the doppelganger acts as an unwelcome kind of mirror."

How can I not see *Snowman* as a doppelganger of all the snowmen we once made, a mirror showing what we don't want to see? Perhaps all artificial snow is a double of the real thing, a reflection insinuating itself into the place of reality. Unable to sleep one night, I end up on the webcam of American Dream, a power-sucking indoor ski area in New Jersey. The place is empty, of course, at 3 a.m., the footage of the ski-hill a flat gray-and-white. It looks like where snow goes to die.

The "contradiction between artificial and nature, because I'm making snow from a machine," as Fischli put it, was always part of the sculpture's point. But that contradiction dissolves —melts—when artifice is all that is left. In this light, the Fischli/Weiss *Snowman* seems part not of the family of jolly snowmen but of the history of horror. Of a future of horror, more precisely, in which this eerie creature lives forever even as snow vanishes from the earth. Whether or not the artists intended, the work now joins a long lineage of "specimens"—anatomical; zoological; ethnographic; samples dead or extinct—in vitrines. Like many such samples, *Snowman* reflects contradictory impulses toward annihilation and preservation: the peculiar instinct to honor through display that which has, in its natural context, been made to disappear. □

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The Garden of Delights

3. – 5.12.2024
Lucinda Childs Dance Company
Dance

7. & 8.12.2024
Lucinda Childs Dance Company
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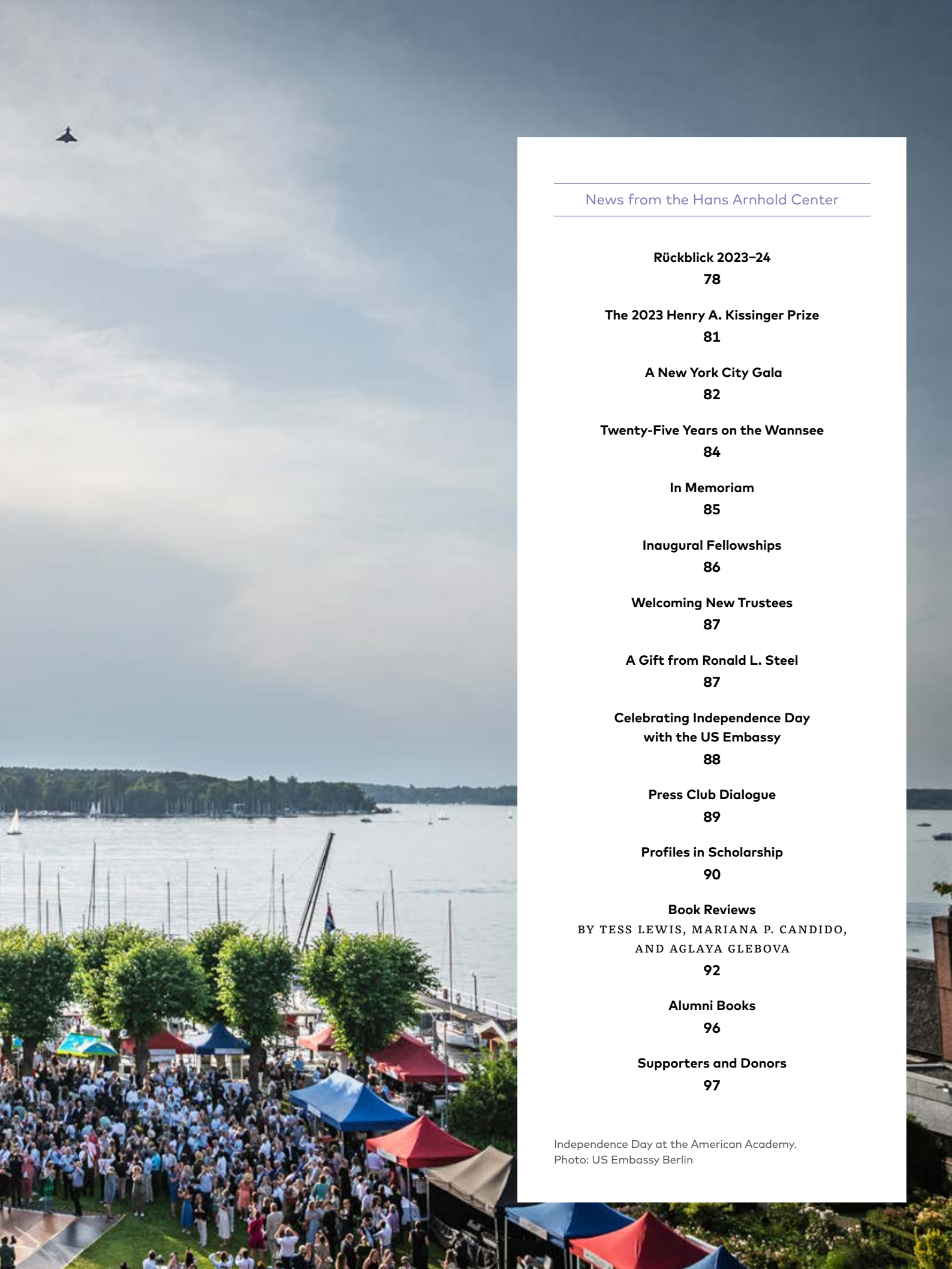
NOTEBOOK



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Independence Day at the American Academy.
Photo: US Embassy Berlin

RÜCKBLICK 2023–24

Impressions from the past academic year

New York Times chief White House correspondent Peter Baker, *New Yorker* columnist Susan Glasser, and Academy president Daniel Benjamin

Musicians Justin Massey, Camila Agosto, and Martine Thomas

Daniel Benjamin and fall 2023 fellow and historian David H. Price

Colin Kahl, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, US Department of Defense

Journalist and TV news anchor Claus Kleber

Writer and cartoonist Liana Finck and illustrator Christoph Niemann

Former director for European Affairs for the US National Security Council Alexander Vindman with Vermont senator Bernie Sanders

Fall 2023 fellow and legal scholar Saira Mohamed

Fall 2023 fellows Mabel Wilson, Camila Agosto, Liana Finck, Jorge Coronado, and Mariana P. Candido

CEO of New America and fall 2023 fellow Anne-Marie Slaughter

All photos: Annette Hornischer

Academy trustees Caroline A. Wamsler and Carol Kahn Strauss

Academy trustee Hans-Michael Giesen (c), with Almut Giesen and artist Edmund de Waal

Yale historian of Central and Eastern Europe Timothy Snyder

Spring 2024 fellow and Black studies scholar Leigh Raiford

Spring 2024 fellow and cultural theorist Johannes von Moltke

Academy treasurer Leah Joy Zell and COO Christian Diehl

Spring 2024 fellow and writer Heidi Julavits

All photos: Annette Hornischer

THE 2023 HENRY A. KISSINGER PRIZE

Honoring NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

On the evening of Friday, November 10, the American Academy awarded the 2023 Henry A. Kissinger Prize to Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of NATO, for his outstanding contributions to the transatlantic partnership, remarkable diplomatic skill through multiple rounds of NATO-membership enlargement, and tireless efforts in rallying members to support Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression. Laudations were delivered by the president of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and Speaker emerita of the United States House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi.

Steinmeier said, "Jens Stoltenberg has been at the helm of NATO in times of monumental challenge—and he lived up to it. He has made our Alliance fit for the monumental changes of our time. He has made NATO fit for the future. We are here to celebrate, to honor Jens Stoltenberg for the vision of freedom and democracy for our nations, of security and partnership within our alliance, of peace and stability in the world around us."

Pelosi's laudation praised Stoltenberg's "mastery in unifying us," which "springs from his deep understanding and respect for each of the 31 NATO allies. . . . When history books are written, this will be the central story of our time—the epic battle between democracy and autocracy. Indeed, the foundations of our freedom that we hold dear—the dignity of the individual, the sovereignty of each state, the institutions of self-government, the rule of law—are under siege from appetites and ambitions of the grasping few. . . . And in this battle, the secretary general's leadership has prevailed."

In his acceptance speech, Stoltenberg said: "A strong NATO is more important than ever. I do not know what the next crisis will be. But I do know that we are safer when we face it together. Our nations are committed to protect and defend each other, 'one for all, all for one.' There is no greater solidarity. Our Alliance is the cornerstone of our security; it is an anchor of stability; and a pillar of peace in the world."

The 2023 Henry A. Kissinger Prize, held at Deutsche Telekom's Berlin Representative Office, was generously underwritten with lead and presenting sponsorship from Bloomberg Philanthropies and Mercedes-Benz Group AG; supporting sponsorship was provided by Bank of America, Bayer AG, Clayton, Dubilier & Rice LLC, and Microsoft Corporation. Additional funding was provided by Deutsche Bank AG, Fresenius SE & Co. KGaA, and Robert Bosch GmbH.

The 2024 Henry A. Kissinger Prize will be awarded on the evening of December 6, at AXICA in Berlin. It will be the first Kissinger Prize awarded after the passing of its namesake. His laudation will be missed. □

Sandra E. Peterson, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Jens Stoltenberg, Nancy Pelosi, Daniel Benjamin

Photo: Chris Marxen

A NEW YORK CITY GALA

On the evening of April 9, 2024, the American Academy in Berlin welcomed nearly 300 guests to its twenty-fifth anniversary gala at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The evening offered a singular occasion to celebrate a milestone birthday, honor three luminaries dear to the institution, and reaffirm the shared transatlantic values that they and the Academy represent. Proceeds from the gala go to support the Academy's core programming; advance hallmark scholarship, artistry, and transatlantic dialogue; and ensure a solid start to the next twenty-five years.

The event honored philanthropist and Academy trustee Marina Kellen French, who has worked tirelessly to guarantee the vitality and relevance of several revered cultural institutions on both sides of the Atlantic; Academy trustee and alumna Julie Mehretu, whose paintings and drawings are internationally celebrated for their complex visual handling of themes including revolt, migration, and exile; and former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi, whose masterful leadership during the global financial crisis helped to save the Eurozone. Video tributes for the honorees and for the Academy were offered by current ECB president Christine Lagarde, former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton, Academy trustees including president of the Munich Security Conference Foundation Council Wolfgang Ischinger and film director Volker Schlöndorff, and alumni including playwright Claudia Rankine, writers Jonathan Safran Foer and Lauren Groff, *The Atlantic*'s editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, and artist Sanford Biggers, among others.

In his remarks, Academy president Daniel Benjamin said, "Our founders ardently believed in fostering a robust alliance of democratic nations, not only through political and military collaboration, but also through the unifying forces of learning and the arts. This conviction is stronger than ever as we navigate contemporary global challenges. . . . It is our fervent belief that through dialogue and shared inquiry, we can surmount these challenges and forge a path towards a brighter future." Remarks were also delivered by Academy chairman Sandra Peterson, vice chairman Stefan von Holtzbrinck, and each of the honorees. □

Daniel Benjamin, Julie Mehretu, Stefan von Holtzbrinck, Marina Kellen French, Mario Draghi, Sandra E. Peterson

Photo: Pontus Höök

Former Italian prime minister and head of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi

Photo: Andrew Kelly/Ann-Sophie Fjelløe-Jensen

Academy trustee Andrew Gundlach and artist Julie Mehretu

Photo: Andrew Kelly/Ann-Sophie Fjelløe-Jensen

Photo: Pontus Höök

Guests at the gala reception; center: trustees Marina Kellen French and Klaus Biesenbach

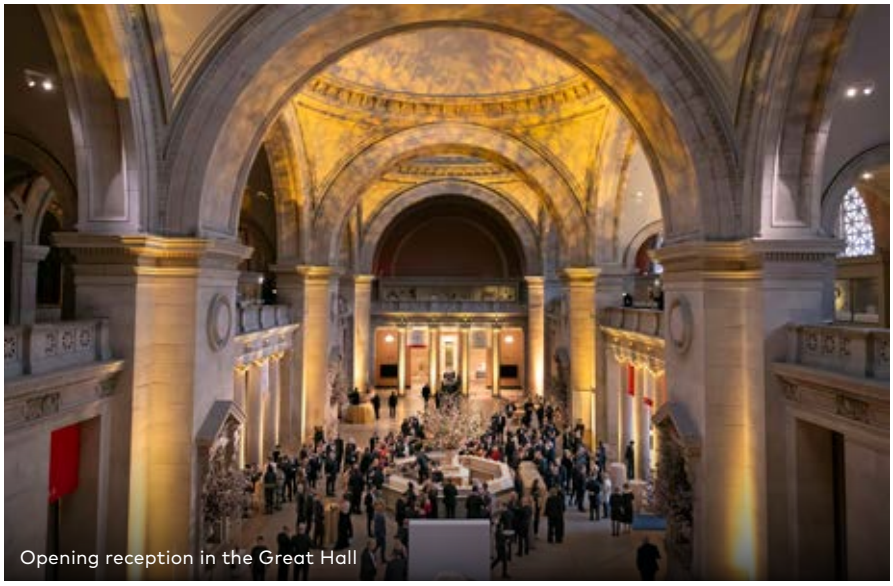

Photo: Pontus Höök

Opening reception in the Great Hall

Photo: Andrew Kelly/Ann-Sophie Fjellø-Jensen

Hillary Clinton delivers video remarks about the American Academy in Berlin

Photo: Andrew Kelly/Ann-Sophie Fjellø-Jensen

Academy trustee Gahl Hodges Burt and New Jersey governor Phil Murphy

Photo: Pontus Höök

Guests at the reception, including trustee Kati Marton (c.), and alumni and journalists Laura Secor and George Packer (upper right)

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN BERLIN
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY GALA SUPPORTERS

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Malcolm Thomson
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Sean Wilentz

Photo: Annette Hornischer

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ON THE WANNSEE

Back in Berlin, the American Academy celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on the evening of May 21, 2024, with 200 longtime supporters, donors, trustees, and friends. Academy president Daniel Benjamin and chairman Sandra Peterson offered remarks about the Academy's impact and its role in shaping transatlantic discourse across a range of scholarly disciplines, the arts, journalism, music composition, and public policy.

As the Academy's prescient founders—Richard Holbrooke, Henry Kissinger, Thomas Farmer, Richard von Weizsäcker, and Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen—understood in the early 1990s, the Atlantic world would not remain forever as optimistic as it was at the end of the Cold War. Institutions of "slow diplomacy," as Holbrooke deemed the Academy's fundamental task, would be necessary to maintaining close transatlantic friendships in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Twenty-five years on, this milestone anniversary gathering not only validated the founders' key insight, it also offered an opportunity to reaffirm the Academy's commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration for many decades to come. □

In Memoriam

HENRY A. KISSINGER (1923–2023)

The American Academy in Berlin's founding chairman passed away on November 29, 2023, age 100. He is survived by his wife, Nancy, and his children, David and Elizabeth.

The American Academy's debt to Kissinger is profound. Present at the institution's creation, in 1994, he was instrumental in setting the Academy's course in its earliest years and continued to be a source of wisdom and instruction. It is no secret that he long mentored Academy founder Richard C. Holbrooke and helped to bring dozens of the foremost political and intellectual figures to speak at the Academy over the years.

The idea behind the establishment of the American Academy in Berlin, Kissinger said from the outset, was the replacement of a US military presence in Berlin with an intellectual and cultural one. In many ways, he saw the American Academy as a bookend on a peacefully resolved Cold War, where American ideas and values would become a permanent presence in the German capital's cultural and social landscape. His steadfast guidance has ensured in many ways that the Academy has remained true to this original mission—one made all the more vital during challenging periods within the German–American relationship over the past 25 years.

In gratitude for his support and in recognition of his extraordinary place in the history of the last century, the Academy created the Henry A. Kissinger Prize in 2007, which has been awarded annually to an outstanding European or American figure for his or her contribution to the transatlantic relationship. Henry Kissinger generously gave of his guidance, intelligence, wisdom, and unfailing humor to the American Academy in Berlin. He will be greatly missed. □

JOHN C. KORNBLUM (1943–2023)

Founding Academy trustee Ambassador John Kornblum passed away at age 80 on December 21, 2023, in Nashville, Tennessee, where he was serving as Vanderbilt University's first-ever Distinguished Ambassador-in-Residence. He is survived by his wife, Helen, and their two children.

The grandson of German immigrants, Kornblum developed an early commitment to the German–American relationship. He entered the American Foreign Service in 1964, first in Hamburg, and then served over the next 35 years in the US Department of State. In 1985, he was appointed US minister and deputy commandant in Berlin, where he orchestrated the iconic June 1987 appearance of Ronald Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate. He went on to serve as US permanent representative to NATO in Brussels from 1987–91, and as the first American ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, where he worked to integrate former Soviet Republics into Western structures. From 1994–97, as senior deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, Kornblum worked on enlarging NATO and the EU; he also served as deputy chief of the Bosnian peace negotiations.

Kornblum's crowning diplomatic role was as US ambassador to Germany (1997–2001), where he oversaw the momentous 1999 reopening of the US Embassy in Berlin. It was there, on May 15, 2024, that Ambassador Amy Gutmann hosted a memorial to commemorate Kornblum's life and legacy. More than forty years in Europe made Kornblum one of the most experienced and effective American practitioners and commentators on Europe and Atlantic relations and an invaluable adviser to the American Academy in Berlin. □

MARTIN S. INDYK (1951–2024)

The American Academy in Berlin mourns the passing of longtime friend, supporter, and mentor Ambassador Martin Indyk. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and his wife, Academy founding trustee and former chairman Gahl Hodges Burt, and to his colleagues and friends.

Indyk served twice as US ambassador to Israel during the Clinton administration, in 1995–1997 and 2000–2001, and was a key architect of its Middle East policy. He also held senior roles in the State Department and National Security Council during the Clinton and Obama administrations. Outside his government service, Indyk was a prolific author and commentator whose many essays and books were essential contributions to US foreign policy debates. He was also the founding executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and later served as executive vice president of the Brookings Institution and as a Distinguished Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Born in London and raised in Australia, Indyk received a bachelor's degree in economics at the University of Sydney and subsequently studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He completed his PhD in international relations at the Australian National University. He moved to the US in 1982 and became an American citizen in 1993, just days before the inauguration of President Bill Clinton and being appointed as National Security Council senior director for the Middle East and South Asia.

Indyk was a frequent and welcome visitor to the Academy whose lectures drew enthusiastic audiences from Berlin's foreign-policy circles. He last spoke here in April 2022, as a Stephen M. Kellen Distinguished Visitor. □

INAUGURAL FELLOWSHIPS

THE BERTHOLD BEITZ FELLOWSHIP

The American Academy in Berlin is pleased to announce funding from the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation for the establishment of a fellowship in honor of the former chairman of the Krupp Foundation, Berthold Beitz, one of the most distinguished Germans of the twentieth century. The Berthold Beitz Berlin Prize Fellowship will commence in fall 2024 and bring one scholar annually to the Academy's Hans Arnhold Center for a semester-long residency in Berlin. The fellowship's focus is on economic and political history. The inaugural Beitz Fellow is Zachary Shore, Professor of History at the Naval Postgraduate School; Senior Fellow at the Institute of European Studies, University of California, Berkeley; and a National Security Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

Berthold Beitz is remembered chiefly as one of the foremost business leaders of his generation. He joined the Krupp steel corporation in 1953 and soon became its chief executive. From 1968 until his death, in 2013, he headed the Krupp Foundation.

The firm's reputation had been deeply damaged by its role during the years of Nazi rule. Alfried Krupp was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment and the confiscation of his assets in the course of the Nuremberg Krupp Trial for the plundering of territories occupied by Germany and crimes in connection with forced labor. Beitz helped revive the firm and restore its standing. His leadership at Krupp—where he would remain for the next 60 years—helped the firm adapt to the postwar economic environment. He played a key role in opening new global markets for Krupp and, ultimately, other German companies. He was also the architect of the transfer of ownership of the firm from Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach to the Foundation, in 1968.

Beitz's legacy extends well beyond his accomplishments as a businessman. During WWII, at great personal risk, he and his wife, Else, rescued an estimated 800 Jews from roundups and deportation by the Nazis in the area of Boryslaw, Poland, where he was managing a critical oil facility. He did so in a variety of ways, including by designating individuals about to be transported to concentration camps as essential workers in his facility—even though many were not, tipping off members of the Jewish community to impending *Aktionen*, and even hiding people in his house. Beitz—along with Oskar Schindler—was one of the very few German businessmen to stand against Nazi criminality. Berthold and Else Beitz are both commemorated as Righteous among the Nations at Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

"We are deeply pleased that we can honor Berthold Beitz's remarkable and humane legacy. His life exemplifies a blend of moral courage, business acumen, and a commitment to social responsibility. This fellowship, created in partnership with the Krupp Foundation, will promote the highest caliber of scholarship. I know of no more fitting a figure than Berthold Beitz to be associated with this important fellowship," said Daniel Benjamin, president of the American Academy in Berlin.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Ursula Gather, chairwoman of the board of trustees of the Krupp Foundation, said, "Berthold Beitz was a man of the century. To honor his life's achievements, the foundation, together with the American Academy in Berlin, has established the Berthold Beitz Fellowship. We aim to give outstanding scholars the opportunity to research and work in his tradition, and to continue his commitment to peace and understanding. We believe that scholarship has the power to contribute to international as well as Jewish–German understanding—in the spirit of Berthold Beitz."


Berthold Beitz

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Sandra Peterson, chairman of the American Academy's board of trustees, said: "It's a privilege to establish a Berthold Beitz Fellowship, which joins an eminent roster of named Academy fellowships that focus on a specific scholarly, writerly, or artistic field. I would like to personally thank Ursula Gather and the Krupp Foundation for their leadership and shared ideals."

The nonprofit Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation has been supporting people and projects in art and culture, education, science, health and sports since 1968 and has thus far committed €695 million to this end. As the largest shareholder of Thyssenkrupp AG, the foundation uses income from its corporate investment exclusively for charitable purposes and pursues the goal of stimulating new developments and encouraging creativity and commitment. Through its work, the foundation sets priorities in the development of science and higher education, seeks to contribute to international understanding and aims to improve the education of young generations. The foundation that bears the name of Alfried Krupp sees itself as having a special responsibility in this regard. Its most recent initiative, launched in 2022, is an independent research project to examine the attitude of its founder during National Socialism.

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY FELLOWSHIP

To engage with the growing field of American Political Economy (APE), the Academy has established a designated fellowship that will contribute to identifying, analyzing, explicating, and rectifying key inequities in American politics, economic arrangements, law, and institutions. The American Political Economy Fellow is chosen as part of the Academy's annual call for applications, via its independent selection-committee process. The American Political Economy Fellowship is generously funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for a period of three years, until November 2026. □

WELCOMING NEW TRUSTEES

The American Academy in Berlin's board of trustees elected two new members at its spring 2024 meeting: Emily Haber, former German ambassador to the United States, and Christoph Schweizer, CEO of Boston Consulting Group.

Ambassador **Emily Haber** is a member of Macro Advisory Partner's Global Advisory Board. She served as German ambassador to the US from 2018 to 2023. A career foreign-service officer, she was deployed prior to her ambassadorial post to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, serving as state secretary overseeing security and migration at the height of the refugee crisis in Europe. In this capacity, she worked closely with the US administration on topics ranging from international terrorism to cybersecurity. In 2009, Haber was appointed political director and, in 2011, state secretary at the Foreign Office, the first woman to hold either post. In Berlin, she has served as deputy head of the Cabinet and Parliamentary Liaison Division, as director of the OSCE Division, and as deputy director-general for the Western Balkans.

Christoph Schweizer has been the CEO of Boston Consulting Group since October 2021. Prior to this role, he served as BCG's chairman for Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. He has also served as a member of the firm's Executive and Operating Committees since 2014. Schweizer is a member of several leading organizations, including the Business Roundtable and the World Economic Forum's International Business Council. For the past four years, INvolve People has recognized Schweizer as a HERoes Advocate Executive Role Model for his work with Women@BCG related to the hiring, promotion, and retention of women. Throughout his career, Schweizer has worked with clients in healthcare, private equity, and across industries in transformational programs such as digital and post-merger integrations. He is a strong advocate of social impact activities, in particular those related to sustainability and combatting climate change. □

Photo: Annette Hornischer

Trustees at the May 2024 board meeting: Caroline A. Wamsler, Tess Lewis, Sandra Peterson, Stefan von Holtzbrinck, Leah Joy Zell, Kati Marton, Manfred Bischoff, Volker Schlöndorff, Christine Wallich, Hans-Michael Giesen, Joseph Koerner, Carol Kahn Strauss, Regine Leibinger

A GIFT FROM RONALD L. STEEL (1931–2023)

In the summer of 2024, the Academy received a generous gift from the estate of the late Ronald L. Steel. A historian, writer, and professor, Steel was the Academy's spring 2005 Bosch Fellow in Public Policy. For more than fifty years, with a style described by the *New York Times* as "astringent yet sparkling," he was "one of the nation's most prolific critics of America's master plans for navigating a perilous, changing world."

Born in Morris, Illinois, Steel earned degrees from Northwestern University and Harvard before joining the Army, and later the Foreign Service, stationed mainly in Europe, where he became a French translator. Returning to the US, he worked as an editor and published essays and books, including the definitive biography of the influential American journalist Walter Lippmann, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award, Bancroft Prize, and the *LA Times* Book Prize for History, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Steel received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Woodrow Wilson Center, and Institute of Advanced Study in Berlin. He taught at Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, and the University of Southern California, among others.

The Academy is deeply honored that Steel chose to include our long-term security and success in his philanthropic legacy. For more information on how to support our mission with a planned gift, please visit americanacademy.de. □

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH THE US EMBASSY

Fireworks over the Wannsee

Saxophonist André Schura

The US Embassy in Berlin took its annual Independence Day celebration to new heights with a lively party at the American Academy on June 27, 2024. The event commenced with the presentation of the colors and national anthems, followed by a joint flyover by the German Luftwaffe and US Air Force that roared across Lake Wannsee in a thrilling show of transatlantic unity. US Ambassador Amy Gutmann delivered the welcoming remarks, reflecting on her memorable tenure and bidding Berlin a heartfelt farewell ahead of her planned return to the US later in the summer.

Around 2,000 people attended, among them guest of honor Margot Friedländer, the remarkable 102-year-old Holocaust survivor, activist, and honorary citizen of Berlin. A stellar series of musical acts got the crowd dancing, including Kirk Smith and his band, the Stars in Concert celebrity homage act, Grammy Award-winning singer Sam Martin, and saxophonist André Schura, who became a social media sensation during the European Football Championship for warming up German fans.

Sponsors served a generous spread of American refreshments to sustain guests until after dark for the party's big finale: a dazzling traditional fireworks display. □

Ambassador Amy Gutmann and Margot Friedländer

Ambassador Amy Gutmann

All photos: Annette Hornischer

Photo: Annette Hornischer

PRESS CLUB DIALOGUE

The Academy was delighted to welcome members of the Berliner Presse Club for an intimate dinner on June 17, 2024 to discuss the upcoming US election. Academy president Daniel Benjamin delivered opening remarks, followed by analysis from spring 2024 Axel Springer Fellow and political scientist Mark Copelovitch. The two then answered a series of incisive questions moderated by Christoph von Marschall, the club's deputy chair and diplomatic correspondent for Berlin daily *Der Tagesspiegel*. With all eyes on the polls in November, news junkies should look out for commentary by both Benjamin and Copelovitch as events unfold. □

PROFILES IN SCHOLARSHIP 2024–25

ANNA-MARIA KELLEN FELLOWS

Mona Simpson (Fall 2024)
Writer
Mona Simpson will be working on a novel, tentatively titled *The Great Man, So-Called*, centered on two women in the life of the iconic American president Franklin Delano Roosevelt: his wife, Eleanor, from whom he was deeply estranged, and Francis Perkins, his secretary of labor, and the first woman to ever hold that post. Roosevelt relied on these women as he devoted his energies during his first two terms on lifting the American economy out of depression and during his third and fourth to the growing involvement with WWII.

Daniel Jütte (Spring 2025)
Professor of History, New York University
In the first half of the sixteenth century, a new type of vehicle made its first appearance in Europe: the coach. In his book project *This Rumbling Age: Locomotion and Shakeup in Europe, 1500–1800*, Daniel Jütte traces the rise of vehicular traffic in Europe and how new modes of locomotion affected society, culture, and economic life.

AXEL SPRINGER FELLOWS

Jefferson Cowie (Spring 2025)
James G. Stahlman Professor of American History, Vanderbilt University
Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jefferson Cowie traces American history through a unique assemblage of elusive stories, from Native encounters with Europeans to the rise of Black Lives Matter. He writes that his book project *Crosswinds of a Common Nation: Unsettling the American Past*, "explores America's idea of itself: a victor's memory largely based on the amnesia required to take a continent and maintain power."

Gideon Rose (Spring 2025)
Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
Gideon Rose's Academy project surveys current challenges to European security and explores how to transform newfound resolve into effective practice. He writes against the backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China's predatory mercantilism, and the rise of populist neoisolationism in the United States, all of which have forced a reconsideration about what might be necessary to protect Europe in the decades to come.

BAYER FELLOW IN HEALTH & BIOTECH

Rochelle P. Walensky (Spring 2025)
Infectious Disease Physician Scientist; Former Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Fellow, Harvard Business School, Kennedy School, T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Drawing upon her career as an infectious disease clinician, a decision-science researcher, hospital division head, and public-health leader, Rochelle P. Walensky comes to the Academy to complete a project about the public health and social/behavioral challenges posed by existing and emerging infectious diseases.

BERTHOLD BEITZ FELLOW

Zachary Shore (Fall 2024)
Professor of History, Naval Postgraduate School
In his book project *A Wiser World*, Zachary Shore asks what history can teach us about making wise decisions. Drawing on global case studies from the twentieth century, he explores how wise national policies have emerged. Some of the best decisions were often complete reversals of foolish ones, resulted from individuals working in opposition to each other, and required empathy for human suffering. Understanding the conditions from which wise policy decisions arise can point toward lasting solutions to current global crises.

BERTHOLD LEIBINGER FELLOW

Peter H. Christensen (Fall 2024)
Arthur Satz Professor of the Humanities, University of Rochester
In his book project *Living with Dignity*, Peter H. Christensen explores how the built environment confers human dignity —or does not—through the lens of four human rights: to safety, work, privacy, and self-actualization. By treating dignity as a matter of design, Christensen applies these perspectives to the challenge of forging a more just society in the face of global upheavals such as climate change.

CAROL KAHN STRAUSS FELLOW IN JEWISH STUDIES

Agnes Mueller (Spring 2025)
Professor of German and Comparative Literature, University of South Carolina
Agnes Mueller's project "Holocaust Migration: The Future of Memory" explores new literature in which young Germany-based Jewish writers negotiate German–Jewish identity against the backdrop of Holocaust migration history, which is but one migration story shaping their self-understanding. Mueller's study investigates the competing legacies of secular Judaism, post-Soviet heritage, new gender and race dynamics, and other marginalized cultures, especially Muslim identities.

DEUTSCHE BANK FELLOW IN MUSIC COMPOSITION

Pamela Z (Spring 2025)
Composer, Performer, and Media Artist
Pamela Z's Academy project "Arbeitsklang/WorkSound" is a sound and performance piece that incorporates sampled work-related sounds with speech fragments from interviews with artists, food and factory workers, journalists, retailers, and educators in Berlin. Her finished piece will be both a fixed-media soundwork and a live, intermedia performance that includes vocal and instrumental sounds woven into the fabric of collaged speech fragments and work sounds.

DIRK IPPEN FELLOW

Adam Shatz (Spring 2025)
US Editor, London Review of Books
In this sweeping chronicle of the postwar Black music avant-garde, entitled *Worlds They Have Not Told You Of: Adventures in Creative Music*, Adam Shatz combines history, criticism, and biographical portraiture to trace the musical routes of sonic exploration and creative self-determination from bebop to free jazz to the present day.

ELLEN MARIA GORRISSEN FELLOWS

Iza Ding (Fall 2024)
Associate Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University
In *Green Waves*, Iza Ding is researching global histories of modern environmentalism that draws on cases across the US, Europe, and Asia. From its birth in conservative politics inspired by romanticist reactions against industrialization to the liberal movement galvanized by labor activists and anti-war protesters, she documents the malleability of environmentalism as a

political idea up to the present, when conservatives are discovering the political limits of climate-change denial.

David Grubbs (Fall 2024)
Distinguished Professor of Music, Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, CUNY
David Grubbs's book project *Sound in Multidisciplinary Collaboration* explores the demands that composers and musicians face when working collaboratively in emerging hybrids of performance, installation, interactive media, and sound art. Drawing on his own compositional work in collaborations with visual artists Anthony McCall, Angela Bulloch, Josiah McElheny, and poet Susan Howe, he offers insights into the contemporary role of music composition within a landscape of diverse practices.

GERHARD CASPER FELLOW

Max K. Strassfeld (Fall 2024)
Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Southern California
In the book project *Disciplining Life*, Max K. Strassfeld examines the concept of life-cycle rituals connected to birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Implicit in the idea of the life cycle is the assumption that an autonomous individual is the basic unit of ritual, and that the goal of life is to reproduce. Drawing on feminist science, disability, queer, critical race, and trans studies, Strassfeld's project seeks to challenge current scholarship that traces the origins of such rituals to rabbinic literature and the vision of hetero-reproductive life to classical Jewish sources.

HOLTZBRINCK FELLOWS

Amy Waldman (Fall 2024)
Writer and Journalist
In the spring of 1927, a *Schneepalast*—an indoor palace filled with artificial snow—opened in Berlin, followed by another in Vienna. The first of their kind, snow palaces were short-lived entertainments; today they gesture at something unsettling: as the climate changes, snowfall and snow cover are diminishing. In her book project *Snow: An Emotional History*, Amy Waldman examines how snow has shaped not just our external circumstances but also our interior lives—and the material and emotional impact of its loss.

Mona El-Naggar (Spring 2025)
International Journalist
Drawing on her twenty-year career in the Middle East for the *New York Times*, Mona El-Naggar's project "Behind the Byline: A Reporter's Tale on Women & Sexuality in the Arab World," explores the region's youth, gender, sex, politics, and culture, as well as her own relationship to her native Egypt as a journalist, woman, and mother.

JOHN P. BIRKELUND FELLOW IN THE HUMANTIES

Sianne Ngai (Spring 2025)
Andrew W. Mellon Professor of English, University of Chicago
Sianne Ngai's book of essays, *Inhabiting Error*, explores the risks of recreating and lingering in "wrong" ways of thinking. Through close readings of writers and artists such as Marx, Hegel, Montaigne, Adorno, Elfriede Jelinek, and Lauren Berlant, Sianne Ngai argues that error is something we must live out to truly understand its reach, even when knowingly or artistically reenacting error risks unconsciously repeating it.

MARY ELLEN VON DER HEYDEN FELLOWS IN LETTERS

Nell Irvin Painter (Fall 2024)
Professor Emerita of American History, Princeton University
In *My Elsewheres*, Nell Irvin Painter undertakes a personal exploration of place and identity. Reflecting on her life abroad—in her youth in France and Ghana, and in her writing in Germany—Painter's book examines how these experiences shaped her self-understanding, perspectives on race and history, and the value of narrative storytelling.

Ayana Mathis (Fall 2024)
Novelist; Essayist; Distinguished Lecturer, Hunter College, CUNY
Ayana Mathis's collection of essays, *Imprinted by Belief*, builds upon her *New York Times* series, which explores Christianity's indelible imprint, for better or for worse, knowingly or unwittingly, on American identity and culture, and the ways in which Christian ideas of morality and justice continue to inform the nation's literature.

Brian Evenson (Spring 2025)
Writer; Professor of Critical Studies, CalArts
Expanding on the themes of his 2005 novel, *The Open Curtain*—schizophrenia, violence, religion—Brian Evenson's book project *Handbook for a Future Revolution* explores the collision of Mormon ideas and ideals with European culture.

MERCEDES-BENZ FELLOW

Ken Krimstein (Spring 2025)
Graphic Novelist
In his semi-autobiographical graphic novel, Ken Krimstein returns to Deerfield, Illinois, the site of his bell-bottomed, trumpet-playing teen years. Deerfield had been the recent scene of egregious racial discrimination that somehow remained invisible to Krimstein and his neighbors. How could it be that a sordid tale involving the Ku Klux Klan, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the US Supreme Court vanished so quickly from the town's memory? *Marching Toward Normal* tells (and shows) a coming-of-age story about race, remembrance, and forgetting in twentieth-century America.

NINA MARIA GORRISSEN FELLOWS IN HISTORY

James N. Green (Fall 2024)
Professor of Brazilian History and Culture, Brown University
Combining oral histories and textual resources, *Generation 77* is a book project that traces student-led mobilization efforts in the years preceding the fall of the Brazilian dictatorship in 1985. Centered in São Paulo in 1976–78, this activism nurtured budding social movements focused on issues of personal identity and social change, energizing the labor strikes of 1979–80, which in turn challenged the dictatorship and enabled the rise of new political leadership—including that of future president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Abhishek Kaicker (Spring 2025)
Associate Professor of History, University of California, Berkeley
In this first full-length biography of scholar and bureaucrat Anand Ram Mukhlis (1699–1751), Abhishek Kaicker offers a study of Mughal intellectual life in a precolonial empire whose institutions of learning were vastly different than the European academy. Mukhlis's work offers insight into intellectual life in a culture dissolving under British rule, while also detailing the changing cultural and political circumstances that ended the Mughal Empire.

RICHARD C. HOLBROOKE FELLOW

Michael Kimmage (Fall 2024)
Professor of History, The Catholic University of America; Senior Non-Resident Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies
With an eye to the nearby war in Ukraine, Michael Kimmage is in Germany to explore a number of topics for a planned set of essays about the impact of the war on Europe and the transatlantic relationship; German policy debates over the course of the war; the proper strategic approach to Russia; the best way of integrating Ukraine into "institutional Europe"; and how the US presidential election will impact European decisions on Ukraine.

BOOK REVIEWS

GRETEL AND THE GREAT WAR
BY ADAM EHRLICH SACHS

Farrar, Straus and Giroux
June 2024, 224 pages

A review by Tess Lewis

The sleep of reason produces monsters, but so does its unblinking stare, and few writers illustrate this more vividly than Adam Ehrlich Sachs. In his fiction, Sachs creates delightfully absurd scenarios in which reason is pushed beyond its logical conclusions with characters who waltz and pirouette into the gray area between lucidity and lunacy. Under his pen, the tension between our perceptions and how we process them—between our sense organs and our organs of sense—opens up existential *mises en abyme*.

Sachs's debut novel, *The Organs of Sense*, follows a nineteen-year-old Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the German polymath, philosopher, and inventor of calculus, statistics, and other branches of mathematics, as he scours the Bohemian countryside for a blind astronomer who has predicted a complete solar eclipse on June 30, 1666. The impetus for Leibniz's search, the novel's unnamed narrator explains, was an intellectual crisis in which Leibniz momentarily lost his faith in reason. On realizing "the 'calamitous' implications of the philosophy of Descartes, who had severed the mind from the world, transformed the world into a gargantuan machine, and made the mind doubt everything but its own existence," the young philosopher sets out to find a "more harmonious relationship between mind and world" through a man who might see and foresee far more with no eyes at all than other men can with two.

When Leibniz finally finds the astronomer—who he admits is far likelier to be "a mystic, a madman, or a cunning fraud" than "a man of reason, a man of science"—he asks the elderly stargazer two burning questions: how did he come to lose his eyes and how did he claim to see the stars without them? The shaggiest of dog stories follows, relating how the astronomer's eyes were plucked out all the while surveying a great deal of epistemological and phenomenological ground from constantly shifting perspectives. In an echo of Thomas Bernhard, the narratives in *The Organs of Sense* are recounted at two or three removes. The main thread of the novel, the story of Leibniz's encounter with the astronomer, is a translation by the anonymous narrator of Leibniz's own account written in Latin and sent to the editor of *Philosophical Transactions*. Yet more stories are nested, matryoshka-like, within that narrative: "I am quoting the Emperor here, the Court Chamberlain said, the astronomer told Leibniz . . .," the narrator's translation tells the reader.

These tales within tales circle around the novel's other main theme: how can we truly know another's thoughts and experiences? Both the real Leibniz and Sachs's fictional one realized that the inadequate instrument of language is all we have "to expose the innards of another head." Leibniz returned again and again in his work to the idea of a *characteristica universalis*, a universal and formal language that would be both the greatest instrument of reason and able to mirror the universe as reflected in each individual mind. But like us, the most Sachs's young Leibniz can aspire to is filling in the many blanks as best he can.

In his second novel, *Gretel and the Great War*, Sachs returns to the inscrutability of our fellow humans at a more acute slant. This novel opens in November 1919, when a young woman who is unable or unwilling to speak is found wandering the streets of Vienna. A public appeal for information is issued and the only reply comes from a patient in a Carinthian sanatorium claiming to be her father. He writes that the woman's name is Gretel and that her childhood was filled with language. Indeed, he told her a bedtime story every night until his confinement at the sanatorium run by a Dr. Krakauer. To continue their cherished ritual, he has enclosed a story, "The Architect of Advanced Age at Last Builds an Abode," to be read to Gretel at night. Twenty-five alphabetized and equally alliterative vignettes follow. Then, after sending "The Zionist Zigzags," the patient is never heard from again.

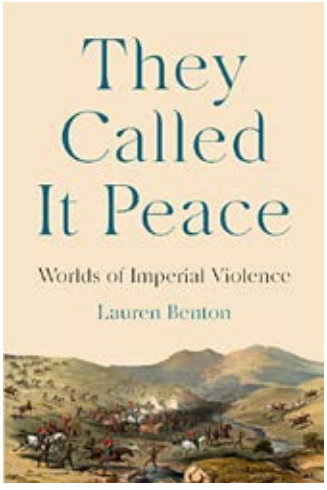
In this shifting kaleidoscope of stories, several of which hint at competing explanations for Gretel's condition, a ballet master abandons classical ballet in search of the ideal sixth position of the feet with fatal results for his prima ballerina wife; a choirmaster trying to coax the purest possible sound from rambunctious boys becomes fixated on an elusive protuberance in the base of their throats; an explorer tirelessly attempts to recruit coffeehouse patrons as companions for expeditions he will never take; an immunologist invents a serum to cure the city's epidemic of hypocrisy; and an exiled Russian revolutionary becomes an unwitting revisionist and foreshadows the rump state of Austria. As the alphabet advances, the political allusions become

more pronounced, culminating in the zigzagging Zionist's forced departure for the newly born Jewish State.

These stories, with their atmosphere of enchantment and strong currents of cruelty, read like fairy tales. It soon becomes clear that these are no innocent bedtime stories, but neatly intertwined, fantastical reflections of the dominant psychological, artistic, social, and political ideas in Austro-Hungary in the first decades of the twentieth century. Although their names are not mentioned, the shades of Adolf Loos, Egon Schiele, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Kraus, Theodor Herzl, and other visionary and uncompromising thinkers and artists flit through the pages of *Gretel and the Great War*. Sachs's focus on the obsessions and absurdities of aesthetic absolutists and intellectual purists are another echo of Bernhard, although he brings both greater anticness and more explicit cruelty to their manias.

The ways in which language limits our personal worlds is another recurring theme. Can enough context ever be conveyed to truly express our thoughts and perceptions? One of Dr. Krakauer's patients points out that "the sanest individual will sound mad if obliged to tell a strange-enough tale." Her quandary is whether she should speak or remain silent about her father's murder of her mother. A group of physiology students who meet in a coffee house near the Pathological-Anatomical Institute find a third alternative to speech or silence by resolving to "renew language by removing its encrustations and digging up everything dead and redundant in it, whatever sagged or had no meaning anymore, and then redraping what remained over the structure of reality and pulling it as taut as possible." Across the street from their coffeehouse is a Cistercian monastery, which the students consider helpful "as a constant reminder of what happens to language when it retreats into a sanctuary and renounces its duty to the world. The duty to describe the world as it is." This anecdote has a typically Sachsian touch. While it isn't necessary to catch all of Sachs's refracted references to the cultural and historical background on which his fiction draws to enjoy his novels, they add an ironic and double-edged texture to his writing. In present-day Vienna, for example, the Natural History Museum's pathological-anatomical collection is housed in the *Narrenturm*, a circular "Fool's Tower" which opened in 1784 as the Imperial-Royal Insane Asylum of Vienna and was the first institution in Europe intended exclusively to treat the mentally ill. The Cistercian Order observes strict rules of silence in their spiritual practice, and yet these students regard "monasteries as manufactories of linguistic mystification." Are the members of the student group perhaps residents of the *Narrenturm* out for a coffee break? Which objective or subjective world do they feel duty-bound to describe "as it is"?

Gretel and the Great War is a fever-dream of Vienna, the beating heart of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in the run-up to the First World War, and a distorting lens that might well help sharpen our view of our own delusions. □



THEY CALLED IT PEACE: WORLDS OF IMPERIAL VIOLENCE
BY LAUREN BENTON

Princeton University Press
February 2024, 304 pages

A review by Mariana P. Candido

In this important book, Yale University historian Lauren Benton places violence and warfare—backed by their rationalizations—at the center of European values, as tools of empire-making and of state consolidation. She contends that since the fifteenth century European empires have made extensive use of violence to justify territorial expansion, stressing the role of plunder of new territories and societies as a core process of wealth accumulation and political centralization. Benton argues that the wealth channeled from these processes into European empires exponentially increased during the eighteenth century; the end of colonialism in nineteenth-century Latin America and mid-twentieth-century Asia and Africa witnessed these same empires mobilize new armies to police and "secure" global peace.

Benton carefully traces the transformation and survival of imperial rationalization into a new global order that maintains the status quo without radically transforming injustices or rupturing cycles of dependency. In the process, as Benton describes, the international community watched, with a certain degree of detachment, the displacement and slaughter of civilian populations in Tenochtitlan, Goa, and Malacca. These places, which until a few decades ago were valuable to empire and nation-making in Europe, are now portrayed as remote and strange, with values almost incompatible with European ideals. Peacekeeping armies justify undeclared wars in regions away from the centers of power, in which politicians and civil societies in Europe and North America tolerate starvation, bombardment, and displacement as tools to preserve the global order. In many ways, *They Called It Peace* is a book about our past, but also about our shared present, resulting in an edifying read for anyone interested in understanding the ongoing crises in Ukraine, Sudan, or Gaza.

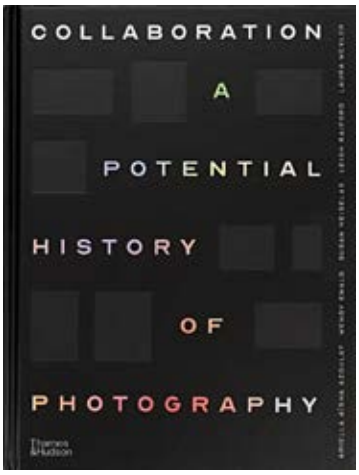
Part of the strength of *They Called It Peace* is that it is meticulously argued, and also that Benton makes a range of disparate, far-flung histories

newly relevant to our times, tapping into different scholarships, including titles so far only available in Spanish. In so doing, she shows the importance of so-called small wars—which did not feel small for their victims—in giving shape to and maintaining the hegemonic coherence of colonial rule. Groups of people who resisted, from Mexica to Xhosa, from Tasmanians to Marathi, were judicially classified as rebels and criminals and, accordingly, subjected to lawful execution and, if need be, annihilation. Benton's history is global, though some historical groups are missing, particularly African societies such as the Kwanyamas and Herero, who have been nearly eradicated by the violent reach of imperialism.

Benton shows how European thinkers, politicians, and diplomats from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries crafted artful statements to provide legal foundations for the seizure of resources and administration of genocide, all done in the name of peace, ethics, and civilization. Moreover, she carefully illustrates these claims with rich case studies that help to concretize abstract ideas such as "just war" or "humanitarian intervention," in particular when discussing the process through which Guaraní, Tasmanians, and Hawaiians slowly saw their sovereignty erased. Articulating the alliance of private capital and states' interests in a chapter called "Private Booty, Public War," Benton explains how political and economic elites have worked to seize resources, assert rights, and impose new legal orders that have always proven disadvantageous to non-Western societies.

Departing from scholarship that celebrates peace as a fundamental European value, *They Called It Peace* emphasizes the role that supposedly peace-loving European monarchies and republics played in terrorizing indigenous communities around the world. While intellectual authorities such as Henry Kissinger and, more recently, Stella Ghervas, have traced a linear intellectual evolution of peace, law, and diplomacy in European thought, policies, and sensibilities, Benton accentuates the role of war, plunder, and degrees of violence. In fact, she places the legacies of enslavement and colonialism at the core of the current international order. Rather than emphasizing peace as a persistent goal from the 1814–15 Congress of Vienna to the creation of League of Nations in 1920 to the European Union in 1993, Benton highlights instead the continued trajectory of slavery, forced labor, and dispossession that resulted from treaties and agreements between European political elites that saw in the United States a continuation and expansion of European "ideals." Slavery and land-grabbing were institutionalized not only for economic gains, but also because they were central to the imposition of a new legal order that would normalize dispossession throughout a long historical process of dehumanizing indigenous communities in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The lasting spirit for Benton is not peace, but plunder, raids, and displacement.

This conclusion might not be novel for scholars of empire, but it will likely come as a surprise for optimistic policymakers, the general Anglophone reader in North America and Europe, as well as scholars who have left the causes of poverty, political instability, and destruction in the margins of their histories. European-inspired interventions have created unequal and corrupt societies in places as different as South Africa, Panama, Egypt, Vietnam, Iraq, and Palestine not because these populations are predetermined to live in disarray but because they have experienced, sometimes for centuries, the effects of European colonialism. *They Called It Peace* stresses how European leaders meticulously worked to impose and preserve instability far away from their shores, and in so doing laid the foundations of what Kissinger's 2014 book *World Order* deemed "a world on the precipice of disorder." □



COLLABORATION: A POTENTIAL HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Thames & Hudson
November 2023, 288 pages

A review by Aglaya Glebova

How does one write a history of photography, a ubiquitous technology nearly two centuries old? *Collaboration: A Potential History of Photography* suggests that one should not write it alone, offering an approach to the medium that embodies its rich, sprawling, and often difficult terrain. And this terrain, the book reminds us, is formed by multiple encounters: first, between the camera, its operator, and the world in front of the lens; then, by the photographs' viewers. Placing this collaborative nature at the center results in a richly illustrated account that expands photography's potential histories.

Itself the result of an extensive and long-running collaboration, this volume is a tapestry of many voices: more than one hundred contributors—scholars, photographers, curators, activists, writers—as well as the thousands of photographers and photographed people who not only appear in the images but whose words frequently accompany them. The result is kaleidoscopic, absorbing, demanding. It is a history of collaborative practice written collectively; the book's form reflects this ethos. That the names of the five editors—Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, Wendy Ewald, Susan Meiselas, Leigh

Raiford, and Laura Wexler—are printed in small type along the cover's edge, absent from the book's spine, already makes the point. So does the cover's lack of imagery. Instead, nine subtly recessed rectangles, like a blank photo album page, await their fill. Therein lies one meaning of the "potential" in the title: a history of photography that is not complete and is always developing, a call to viewers and readers to join in this ongoing rethinking. The cover's refusal to showcase the images inside underscores a central premise of the book: the history of photography cannot be reduced to a handful of pictures or a single narrative.

The co-editors ask, "What do we learn when we look at photography through the lens of collaboration?" Beginning with the historical and technological realities of a medium that "generally requires the labor of more than one person" and often involves the presence of another, the introduction offers a wide frame for what might be considered a collaboration. While this includes those who engage with photography by dint of occupation—"editors, archivists, laboratory workers, assistants, translators"—the book's real charge lies in fostering a form of collaboration between people pictured in the photographs and those looking at them. It is fundamentally a project of restitution: of presence, labor, agency to those traditionally seen as photographic "subjects." (Hence also the editors' choice of the term "photographed person," a usage this review honors.)

The book is divided into eight clusters exploring different kinds of collaboration. Contained within each cluster is a collection of "squares," or two-page spreads, dedicated to a photographic project. With over seven hundred illustrations, the range of the squares is impressive, and sometimes dizzying, in its reach across space and time and its inclusion of iconic as well as little, or lesser, known photographs. Sunil Gupta's portraits of gay couples taken in 1980s London but not exhibited until four years ago coexist with Alfred Stieglitz's endlessly reproduced photographs of Georgia O'Keefe; the suffragettes' attempts to evade the cameras of Scotland Yard are clustered with Iraqi-born artist Wafaa Bilal's 2007 performance inviting online viewers to shoot him with a remotely controlled paintball gun; and strollers concealing KGB cameras follow shortly after Victorian mothers as they try to keep their children still for the long exposure.

While the book is structured thematically, the clusters unfold in roughly chronological order. Hence the first photographs we encounter are of Frederick Douglass, including a daguerreotype made in 1841, a mere two years after the technology's public announcement. Here, we are placed at the dawn of the photographic era with one of the medium's earliest adopters and proponents. While Douglass was not a photographer himself, images of him are consistent in their portrayal, evidence of his role in the making of these pictures across a fifty-year-long collaboration with more than one hundred photographers. Douglass was also a believer in photography's emancipatory potential, its accessibility's equalizing power. It is fitting, then, that the book's final square is dedicated to a photographic archive of "viral protest," in this case against Iran's mandatory hijab law. Photography's potential history is here bookended by collaborations that work against the status quo, that insist on change through representation.

Yet *Collaboration* does not advance an argument for photography's singularly progressive potential. One question that haunts the pages between the opening and closing squares concerns the limits of critical exposure. How should one handle photographs showing "non-consenters"—people coerced into posing for the camera or subjected to the violence of the regimes in which the camera was embedded? Should such images be shown to expose historical violence, or is their reproduction bound merely to perpetuate the original crime? One answer appears halfway through the volume, in a layout that is strikingly sparse against the dense field of images that unfolds before and after. The sole photograph shows a book spine reading *Sexe, Race & Colonies*; the texts that frame it are deliberately minimal in describing the images within. As the Pan-African Black political collective Cases Rebelles insists, the circulation of these photographs, originating in the violence of French colonialism, only restages the crime without the potential for justice.

There are other moments in *Collaboration* that argue for the politics of withdrawal from the photographic gaze. "Perhaps the best collaborative practice," reflects the Zimbabwean-American writer and activist Zoé Samudzi, "is to withdraw oneself from the burdened duty of interlocutor, to simply offer resources to another/the 'other,' to remain invisible and anonymous. . . . Perhaps the most effective gesture is not to initiate or take the photograph at all." As *Collaboration* illustrates time and again, photography's history is also one of the coercion of visibility, a disciplinary gaze tuned to demands of control. Yet the refusal of the camera's surveillance can also be bolstered by photography: in images of Black South Africans burning their passbooks—mandatory headshots still glued in—the protesters seem to welcome the chronicling of this act of resistance.

Although digital technology changed photography's relationship to external reality—most photographs today are not physical traces of light imprinted on a photosensitive surface but grids of pixels—photography remains ineluctably, and often painfully, connected to the world. Perhaps partly for this reason, some questions posed by *Collaboration* feel as existential as they are photographic. The editors ask: "How can we make sense of, limit, or even bear to be indebted to, abusive forms of collaboration that are registered in many of the projects?" What to do when one is "born to," and inhabits, "a world that is full of photographs produced under violent circumstances?" The pages that follow do not try to cut a smooth path around the fractures and violations that comprise photography's history. By making space for the "utopic, dystopic, messy, complex," this collaboration has created an account that is honest and gripping in its contradictions. □

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