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The Meaning *of* **Zohran Mamdani**

by
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‘A Politics of No Translation.’ Zohran Mamdani on His Unlikely Rise

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The Brief August 14, 2025

Inside the rise of Zohran Mamdani, the leaked plans for Trump’s Golden Dome, and more

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It's not easy to move around New York City as Zohran Mamdani anymore.

Like when the 33-year-old Democratic nominee for mayor leaves a union meeting to walk to his Manhattan campaign office, as he did one Monday morning in July. Within a block, a phone-wielding crowd forms and follows. "Oh my God, hello," someone blurts. People clap. Cars honk. Traffic down Fifth Avenue comes to a standstill as a plumber's van stops and a guy hops out to shake Mamdani's hand. There is some heckling. "Antisemitic!" someone shouts. But mostly it is star treatment, in multiple languages and from all generations.

All this is new: the adulation, the notoriety, the xenophobic death threats that have prompted an entourage of men with spaghetti earpieces. Before 2025, basically no one knew who Mamdani was. Over the course of eight months, the democratic socialist and backbench state assemblyman went from local long shot to likely mayor of America's biggest city. Suddenly he is a main character in national politics—the ubiquitous subject of cable news segments, a lightning rod on the left and right. Senior Democrats have weighed in for and against him. President Donald Trump has pioneered a dark new birtherism by questioning his immigration status and floating his possible arrest. (Mamdani, who would be the city's first South Asian and Muslim mayor, was born in Uganda and became a U.S. citizen in 2018.) To many progressives, his style of politics—principled, pocketbook-focused, and online—was an electrifying answer for a moribund party.

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Mamdani says he wants to be a mayor who breaks down barriers between politicians and the public. “I think the most important thing is that people see themselves and their struggles in your campaign,” he tells me during an hour-long interview in mid-July in a windowless conference room in his Manhattan campaign office. “And I think the larger struggle for us as Democrats is to ensure that we are practicing a politics that is direct, a politics of no translation, a politics that when you read the policy commitment, you understand it, as how it applies to your life.”

In interviews with more than 30 lawmakers, political figures, supporters, friends, and critics, Mamdani emerges as both more interesting and more complicated than the caricatures suggest. He

is a very eloquent, very young man who is both less experienced than his predecessors and more gifted than almost any of his peers at connecting with the party’s voters. He is an ideologue interested in creative solutions, less radical than painted when you dig into his policy proposals and yet more sincere in his left-wing ambitions. He is a movement politician who won by being in touch with the streets, and who must now cloister himself inside as he prepares for the business of governing, not betraying the people by not failing them.

If that all seems like a tall task, it’s worth remembering Mamdani’s master class in the June Democratic primary. He started in single digits, introducing himself via viral videos and cross-borough walkabouts, from conservative precincts to immigrant neighborhoods to mosques, pitching free buses, rent freezes for regulated units, and universal childcare. In the world’s financial capital, he wore the mantle of democratic socialism; in the jurisdiction with the largest Jewish community outside Israel, he refused to back away from criticism of that country’s war in Gaza. He amassed an army of 50,000 volunteers, who helped knock on 1.6 million doors. In the end, his multicultural coalition trounced Andrew Cuomo, a former governor and scion of a New York political dynasty boosted by more than \$20 million in super-PAC spending. He looked, in the words of one of his opponent’s own advisers, like “one of the best political athletes I’ve ever seen play the game.”

Read More: [*Mamdani Delivers Decisive Victory in Democratic Primary.*](#)

The prospect of Mamdani’s mayoralty scandalized many of New York’s power brokers, some of whom vowed to stop him in the November general election. It also alarmed many national Democrats, who see Mamdani’s politics—his past support for defunding the police, his criticism of Israel and defense of the Palestinian cause, his proposals for city-owned grocery stores and

higher taxes on the wealthy—as a dangerous step left for a party searching for its footing in the Trump era. “Tackling the city’s challenges will require top-notch management and fresh approaches,” James Whelan, president of the Real Estate Board of New York, tells me, “rather than the same old ideas like raising taxes and restricting rents.”



In the meantime, Mamdani’s shoe-leather primary campaign has given way to his indoor era. As a newcomer now in training for one of America’s toughest jobs, he lives life in 15-minute increments, working to assure skeptics that he’s ready and reasonable and won’t send businesses fleeing to Florida. In conference rooms and on calls, he is exploring the boundaries of what it means to be mayor, even saying “it’s an open conversation” whether he’d move into Gracie Mansion.

It appears he will get the choice. Recent polling shows Mamdani with double-digit leads over Cuomo and incumbent mayor Eric Adams, both of whom are running on independent ballot lines. How the nation’s financial and cultural capital fares under his leadership would be Exhibit A in the fight for the Democrats’ future. At stake is the trust of voters thousands of miles from Midtown, for whom Mamdani would be a test case—another failed

figurehead of a major Democratic city, or the leader who can get people believing in government again.

In 2021, Mamdani was a newly minted state assemblyman looking to make his mark in the halls of power. He had swept into Albany on the currents of racial-justice protests and pandemic activism. But now he was stuck on Zoom.

Forging connections was a challenge. Albany is always a cipher for newcomers, a “place of an asymmetry of information,” says Elle Bisgaard-Church, Mamdani’s then chief of staff, who later became his primary campaign manager. Even understanding how to file legislation, she says, “was something that we had to learn from scratch.” Mamdani was serious about using the perch to help working people. He put Bisgaard-Church through four hiring interviews, including one with New York City Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) reps. But in a world where it can take a decade to get a committee chair, the road to making change would be long. Mamdani was eager to change the script, leveraging skills learned in his brief but varied pre-political life.

Zohran Kwame Mamdani was raised in Uganda, South Africa, and New York by public-facing parents: Mahmood Mamdani, a scholar of postcolonialism who landed at Columbia University, and filmmaker Mira Nair, an Academy Award nominee who has directed such luminaries as Denzel Washington. “In a sense he does come from a showbiz family,” says Amitav Ghosh, a Man Booker Prize—shortlisted writer and friend of Nair’s. From his father, Ghosh says, Mamdani took “his very deep commitment to social justice,” and from his mother, an “incredible energy” and “fine aesthetic sense.” His charmed upbringing instilled the stage presence that aided an amateur rapping career, plus opportunities like working on music in his mother’s film *Queen of Katwe* and getting celebrities Madhur Jaffrey and Lupita Nyong’o to appear in his music videos.



The family moved to a Manhattan apartment for Columbia faculty when Mamdani was 7. According to Mamdani, the university chipped in half the cost of his enrollment at the progressive Bank Street School for Children, where elementary tuition now runs north of \$60,000 per year and gym contests would end in ties even when one team had clearly “come out on top,” Mamdani says. For high school he enrolled at Bronx Science, one of the city’s most rigorous public schools, where he ran for student-body vice president, promising fresh juice. These extremes in education were an example of Mamdani straddling the city’s divides. He both tutored and received tutoring for standardized tests. “To be a New Yorker is also to live in multiple worlds at once,” he says. “There is no one part of New York City more New York City than another.”

Mamdani's political education came in the world of progressive activism. He co-founded a Students for Justice in Palestine chapter at Bowdoin, a small liberal-arts school in Maine. After graduation, he toggled between organizing and music, and cut his teeth working on losing campaigns for left-leaning city candidates. He also spent a formative year and change as a foreclosure-prevention counselor at the Queens housing organization Chhaya Community Development Corporation. Executive director Annetta Seecharran remembers Mamdani as creative and committed, bringing a "very positive, can-do energy" to a job that requires patient engagement to help vulnerable people stay in their homes.

In 2020, Mamdani ran a campaign for state assembly focused on issues like "housing as a human right" for the kinds of vulnerable people he'd recently advised. He beat a five-term incumbent in a Queens district that included hip Astoria cafes as well as public-housing complexes. As a junior figure in state government, he quickly became part of a progressive ecosystem nudging the Democratic caucus left. In April 2021, Mamdani joined a "sleep-out" in the capitol's so-called War Room [to push](#) for higher taxes on the wealthy and easier access to housing relief. He and a handful of other young lawmakers came prepared with sleeping bags and a tent, trying to pressure the party leaders negotiating the \$200 billion state budget mostly behind closed doors. "It was part of an impatience with the nature of politics as it was," says Mamdani, "and wanting to break out of the manner in which these issues are discussed and closer to the way in which they will actually be felt by New Yorkers." In the end, the state budget did include [some tax hikes](#) on the rich—more than what then governor Cuomo had proposed, but much less than the tens of billions of dollars Mamdani and his progressive allies had called for.

Later that year, Mamdani took direct-action protest a step further, joining a 15-day hunger strike to support debt-ridden taxi drivers struggling to make payments on the wildly expensive "medallions" that allow them to legally pick up passengers. "Throughout that

entire process, he treated us as equals,” says Bhairavi Desai of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance. Mamdani helped liaise with senior politicians like U.S. Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer in successful negotiations for a city-backed relief deal for drivers. After two weeks without food, he left the protest in a wheelchair.



He settled into the Albany routine, which could sometimes feel like being “freshmen in college,” says Jabari Brisport, a newly elected state senator and fellow democratic socialist who became Mamdani’s roommate. The two shared single hotel rooms with two double beds, trading notes on their new jobs and entertaining themselves after long days. “He likes his TikToks,” Brisport said. Sometimes Mamdani would indulge in reality-TV shows like *Love Island*. A practicing Muslim, Mamdani regularly attends Friday prayer services, and in the evenings during Ramadan, Brisport recalls, he would prepare for the coming fast with a big scoop of peanut butter.

Mamdani was learning how to manage relationships and build legislative narratives. He launched a “Fix the MTA” campaign to overhaul the behemoth Metropolitan Transportation Authority through frozen fares, free city buses, and better subway service. He cajoled potential allies and threw himself into promotion, with a slick website and [campaign-style videos](#) featuring relatable

commuters. “His strengths were mobilizing public support on behalf of policy,” says Queens state senator and deputy majority leader Michael Gianaris, Mamdani’s partner on the campaign, “which is a very rare trait.”

The pair ended up winning a pilot program for one free bus route per borough in 2023—a modest but tangible victory that became a key part of Mamdani’s mayoral campaign. Friends and foes alike have scrutinized this episode as an example of how he might govern: working the inside and outside games for big progressive moon shots and, in this case, landing something creative and concrete, if not complete. “We’ve been guided by the principle that you put the stake as far to the left as possible—of course, within some reason, and grounded in the actual material stuff,” says Bisgaard-Church. “But that, as a negotiating position, is the starting place.”

Yet the bus pilot was also an example of Mamdani’s learning curve. There were limits, he found, to what you can achieve outside the real negotiating rooms. The pilot did not get expanded or even renewed in 2024. A state lawmaker with knowledge of the matter says that Mamdani had complained to the Democratic assembly speaker, Carl Heastie, about a part of the state budget he feared would lead to higher rents. The budget was not yet close to finalized, this lawmaker told me, and it included other tenant protections. The showdown ended with Mamdani casting a largely symbolic no vote on the budget bill, and his bus pilot disappearing.

Both Heastie and Mamdani deny the lost pilot was punishment for Mamdani’s protests. Certainly the state transportation authority was [lukewarm](#) on the pricey program. In an interview, Heastie praises Mamdani as knowledgeable and honest. Asked how Mamdani changed in Albany, the Bronx power broker says the young socialist learned “that you can’t always let the perfect be the enemy of the good.”

For example? “This year,” Heastie notes, “he voted for the entire budget.”

Just days after Donald Trump’s second presidential win in November, Mamdani donned his dark suit and tie and went to parts of Queens and the Bronx that had seen surprising shifts toward the Republican. Extending a microphone to people on the street, Mamdani asked about their reasons for voting for Trump. The answers would form the spine of his campaign. High rent. Elevated prices. *La comida.* Gaza.

The snappy Trump-voter video went viral, helping Mamdani introduce himself to voters through the prism of policy. He cut more videos: talking “halal-flation” with street-cart workers, jumping into the wintry ocean off Coney Island to dramatize “freezing” the rent. They were a marked shift from the doom and gloom enveloping the party. Mamdani seemed intent on having fun.

Some of this was natural for a digital native. Mamdani also credits his wife Rama Duwaji, 28, an illustrator and animator with work in the *New Yorker*. “She has before this campaign been someone that has taught me how to better use social media,” Mamdani tells me. “Mostly just thinking about Instagram, how I am very much a millennial.”

Signs of momentum were apparent early. At the campaign’s first big canvassing event in mid-December, primary field director Tascha Van Auken noticed something strange happening. Even raw recruits said they’d had a great experience—a far cry from the typical slammed doors. Over and over, Van Auken recalls, canvassers reported that “talking about affordability really resonates.” The canvassers themselves were also becoming a weapon. Door-knocking is central to New York City races that demand retail politics, and progressive challengers often boast

about their volunteers. But Mamdani was doing it on a different level.

Read More: *The New York Socialist Mayor Who Came 100 Years Before Mamdani.*

The operation was unleashed not just on his far-left base but also new and more moderate voters. There was always going to be a section of the electorate that would not stomach old tweets like “Taxation isn’t theft. Capitalism is,” and his posts supporting the “defund the police” movement. Yet the city must consult the state on tax changes, and during the campaign Mamdani notably backed away from the “defund” position, promising to sustain the NYPD’s head count and praising its current technocratic commissioner. He spent more time channeling the economic insecurities of a broad group of New Yorkers into simple policy slogans like “fast and free buses.” He framed such ideas as common sense, not Leninist. Supporters noted they had precedent: the billionaire former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg once [discussed](#) free mass transit, an experiment that has been tried in jurisdictions as distant as Boston (which has multiple free bus routes) and the entire country of Luxembourg.



He also had the good luck to run against the right primary opponent. Cuomo was attempting a comeback after resigning in 2021 amid sexual harassment allegations (which he denied) and questions about an undercount of COVID-era nursing-home deaths. The former governor embodied a Democratic establishment voters were increasingly leaving behind. Cuomo ran what one former aide called a “grim and joyless campaign,” relying on name recognition, TV ads, and old relationships with organized labor. Mamdani’s campaign, meanwhile, was direct messaging people on Insta-gram and basking in supporter-made T-shirts. His connections in elite New York circles helped land the support of local icons like Alison Roman of cookbook fame and model Emily Ratajkowski.

Opponents scoffed, not realizing that Mamdani was experiencing a virtuously reinforcing cycle of vibes, field, and message: the names brought attention, which brought volunteers to knock on doors of people who thought groceries cost too much.

Something was happening in an electorate angry at Trump and willing to give a newcomer a chance. “We came out of the pandemic with the kind of spiritual malaise in the country that I think is unaddressed by the 10-point policy plans that everybody’s got,” says Patrick Gaspard, a senior national Democrat informally advising Mamdani. Once he got traction, Mamdani didn’t let up. In their Albany hotel room, Brisport had to ask him to take a curfew of 11:30 p.m. and cut the never-ending strategy calls. On top of the door knockers, there were 100 policy volunteers alone; the campaign launched voter-education outreach in languages like Urdu and Bangla. Seasoned New York pols recognized the force of his message. “I think FDR would recognize him,” says former mayor Bill de Blasio. “The whole campaign was about affordability.”

The Friday before the election, Mamdani made an hours-long trek down the spine of Manhattan, dapping up pedestrians and outdoor diners. “Every time that we walked on the street in the last couple of weeks, it was bedlam,” says state senator Gustavo Rivera. At

Mamdani's primary-night party in Queens, the two cop cars closing down the quiet street soon seemed like an omen. Mamdani and his team crash-wrote a victory speech in which he hit a new register compared with the early fun videos. "A life of dignity should not be reserved for a fortunate few," he said, framed by the words *Afford to Dream*. "I will never hide from you," he promised. "Your concerns will always be mine."

A few weeks later, Mamdani found himself on a dais on the 27th floor of Rockefeller Center, looking out at some 150 CEOs and high-ranking members of the business world, talking about the power of the World Cup.

It was one of many stops on what might be called his Don't Worry Tour, which also included visits with Jewish groups, Black businesspeople, and unions. The tour is Mamdani's attempt to allay fears about the unabashedly left-wing candidate. Financier Bill Ackman pledged to "take care of the fundraising" for a centrist opponent. But many more sober-minded skeptics were concerned Mamdani was unprepared to manage 300,000 municipal employees, let alone a city of some 8.5 million people. "In order to be an effective mayor," says Charles Lavine, Mamdani's veteran state assembly colleague and president of the New York Chapter of the National Association of Jewish Legislators, "it's going to require a lot more than merely a theatrical bent."

Mamdani tried to answer the suspicions by showing up. He would wear his suit. He'd clasp his hands and smile warmly. He'd spend close to an hour with the family of NYPD officer Didarul Islam, killed by a mass shooter in Manhattan. He would listen, and reassure, and say that he'd be a mayor "for everyone who calls this city home."

Few events got as much attention as the closed-door one with the CEOs, hosted by the Partnership for New York City, a nonprofit

business leadership group. In a conference room floating above the city and stocked with a spread of cookies, fruit, and cheese, Mamdani was not swarmed for selfies upon entry, as he usually is these days. He did a fireside chat and Q and A, during which he was grilled about his thoughts on the “globalize the intifada” brouhaha. These three words had threatened to derail the close of his primary campaign when he was asked in a [podcast interview](#) with the *Bulwark* about the pro-Palestinian phrase—which he maintains he does not use—and declined to condemn it, saying he was “less comfortable with the idea of banning the use of certain words.”

Outrage ensued. Democrats like Rahm Emanuel and Josh Shapiro criticized him. The phrase, which one of his top Jewish allies [says](#) can be interpreted as “open season on Jews,” became shorthand for the broader concerns about Mamdani’s record of Israel criticism. He has supported the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and suggested that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should be arrested for war crimes. The day after Hamas’ terrorist attack on Oct. 7, 2023, Mamdani’s response mourned the dead but quickly turned to criticism of Israel’s actions. He has often talked about the problem of anti-semitism and the need for anti-hate-crime funding, and his campaign attracted Jewish supporters—including many on board with his advocacy for Gaza—but during the primary he stuck more or less to his original take on “intifada.”



To the CEOs, however, Mamdani said he would discourage the use of the phrase—a small but pointed evolution in language. In our interview, Mamdani frames the shift as the consequence of listening to New Yorkers, including Jewish leaders, as well as a rabbi who said the phrase evoked memories of bus bombings in Haifa. “The job of the mayor is to deliver for New Yorkers,” he says. “And it’s also to take care of New Yorkers.”

Mamdani has walked this tightrope throughout his post-primary appearances. A less-parsed example was his comment about being excited for the economic potential of the World Cup, for which the greater New York area will be a host next summer. “He saw an opportunity to use that the same way the Bloomberg administration used the failed Olympics bid, to look at the infrastructure of the city,” says Kathryn Wylde, CEO of the Partnership for New York City, referencing the former mayor’s efforts to land the 2012 Games and build housing and new transportation ahead of them. Mamdani has embraced the idea of using a major event like this to achieve “virtuous growth” in other settings, even name-checking Bloomberg’s business-friendly deputy mayor and establishment favorite Dan Doctoroff in our interview.

With examples like these, Mamdani has signaled an interest in making government work better, much like the nascent

“abundance” movement among Democrats eager to cut red tape to build new housing and infrastructure. “Democracy is not just under attack from authoritarianism from the outside,” Mamdani tells me. “It’s also under attack from a withering faith on the inside of its ability to deliver on these material challenges in working-class people’s lives.”

For some national Democrats, the Don’t Worry Tour will never be enough. Their concern is Mamdani’s very presence in office, which would punctuate the party’s leftward turn in major cities and give ammunition to Republicans eager to paint them as outside the mainstream in the 2026 midterms. “A socialist is not the face of the Democratic Party,” says Long Island Representative Laura Gillen. The irony is that Mamdani’s victory was the kind of affordability-focused, podcast-conversant campaign Democrats have called for after 2024.

Mamdani’s performance as mayor would be scrutinized for portents of the Democrats’ future. Potential lessons abound. To progressives, his rise is the product of his policies. Centrists who loathe those policies praise his style. Republicans are all too eager to cast him as the face of the opposition. And for some Democratic leaders with an eye on 2028, the question is not whether a Mamdani clone should be the next Democratic standard bearer—historically unlikely—but whether the party can win in other places not by emulating his ideology but by borrowing from his tool kit.



Despite his growing national profile, Mamdani remains focused on local issues. On his core pledge to freeze rents for the city's approximately 1 million regulated units, a board controlled by the mayor decides the increases each year. De Blasio's administration imposed rent freezes three times. Yet housing experts raise concerns about buildings with lots of regulated units where the costs of maintenance couldn't be covered by bumps on the other apartments. "The concern is that that could really lead to lower-quality buildings," says Vicki Been, a top housing official under de Blasio and faculty director at the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. Even de Blasio cautioned that a freeze was "doable" but "each year should be evaluated unto itself." Mamdani has committed to four years of no increases, pointing to broader ways to help landlords, like reducing water bills.

Read More: [*How Mamdani Plans to Fix New York City's Housing Crisis.*](#)

Some of his campaign issues cross ideological boundaries, such as universal childcare starting at 6 weeks. It is an expensive proposition; Mamdani's campaign estimated a [price tag](#) of \$5 billion to \$7 billion. It is also an issue where Mamdani's position aligns with New York's more moderate Democratic governor, Kathy Hochul. The city has led the way before with universal pre-

K in the de Blasio administration, while Mayor Adams embraces a childcare pilot program for low-income children 2 and under.

Mamdani appears eager for the negotiation. “There are real questions of phasing in and stages,” he says, “but they cannot be used as a means by which to avoid reaching the milestone.”

In preparation, Mamdani’s team has reached out to Bloomberg. He has picked the brains of former NYPD chiefs, and conferred with leaders as varied as state Democratic Party leader Jay Jacobs (who found Mamdani “anxious to work with everyone”), former Federal Trade Commission chair Lina Khan, and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, whom he praises as “one of the inspirations for me in this moment.” He is still adjusting to his new reality. “I already miss being outside,” he tells me. “I now go to cemeteries a lot between meetings,” he adds, “because they are parks without people.”



One day in mid-July, Mamdani opted for the train en route to a musicians' union event. Such trains are the city's public forum, and soon the nominee was swarmed once more on the uptown R. A kid with shaking hands approached: "Mr. Zohran, can we get a photo?" Someone claimed Mamdani must know her. Someone else offered him their priority seat. Four stops later, the train deposited him near Times Square, and Mamdani was out in the street again, walking by a woman passed out on the sidewalk, a thicket of competing hot-dog and falafel stands, a building security guard who shouted "I voted for you!" from across the street. It was the complex and ever changing tapestry of New York, and also a totem of the kind of politics that Mamdani said he wants to practice: "one that is in

person, that is in public, that is with people.” —*With reporting by Simmone Shah*

<https://time.com/7308924>

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‘I’m Afraid:’ What U.S. Aid Cuts Mean for the Women of Afghanistan



Over the past 12 years, the small family-health clinic in Melmastok, a remote mountainous community in Afghanistan’s central Daikundi province, has withstood multiple upheavals—from a Taliban insurgency to the withdrawal of international troops and the collapse of the U.S.-backed government in Kabul in 2021. Ever since, as the [Taliban](#) returned to power, once again issuing edicts to suppress women and girls, the clinic and its 34-year-old midwife Atifa have continued to provide a lifeline for mothers and young children. Until this summer, that is. Come July, the clinic finally closed its doors. For Atifa, who identifies herself like many local women with only her first name, that means one thing: “Mothers and children will die.”

The reason? The wholesale [slashing](#) by Washington of U.S. humanitarian aid, until recently the single biggest source of development support for ordinary Afghans. That support had been critical for the survival of health and other development projects in the country, flowing in via the U.N. and its partners. But, as of August this year, funding [cuts](#) have led to the suspension or [closure](#) of 422 health facilities in the country. (Justifying the cuts, a senior

Trump Administration official cited reports of attempts to disrupt aid by the country's Taliban authorities.)

The reductions include 21 family-health clinics in Daikundi, among them Atifa's. Officially known as Family Health Houses, and staffed by solitary midwives like Atifa, a cleaner, and a guard, the clinics provided care to women and children in areas where communities have no access to other health facilities. Nationwide, more than 100 such clinics have closed as a result of the cuts.

[Read More: Far from Home: After the Fall of Kabul, Afghan Women Are Attempting to Build New Lives Abroad](#)

The impact in many cases has been devastating. In April, Ali Hassan rushed his pregnant wife Miriam to their local Family Health House in Taiko, another remote Daikundi community, when she complained of pain and believed she was close to giving birth. It was only after waiting for the midwife for several hours that they realized that the clinic had been closed. The midwife had been laid off. Desperate for medical attention, they headed for a district hospital around five hours' drive away. It was too far. Both Miriam, 38, and their child succumbed shortly after they reached the hospital. "There was a chance we could have saved both mother and child ... or at least the mother [had the clinic been open]," Sediqa, a midwife at the district hospital, told TIME.

The hospital director, Eztaullah Alizada, agreed, adding, "These women live far away, and sometimes labor begins en route. By the time they arrive, they are close to dying."



Globally, the trend has been going in the other direction. Years of interventions by local and international bodies mean that women today are more likely than in the recent past to survive childbirth, with maternal mortality—or the deaths of women per 100,000 live births—[declining](#) by 40% from 2000 to 2023, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

But cuts could push Afghanistan, already suffering from comparatively high levels of [maternal deaths](#), further in the other direction. Nearly two-thirds of global maternal deaths occur in countries like Afghanistan that are affected by “fragility or conflict,” the WHO says. As Kurshid, a 30-year-old pregnant

woman in Daikundi told TIME, “All of us are afraid we or our children might die.”

Beyond pregnant women, the clinics also provided care for young children—and their closures have led to fear among many, like Mariam, a 24-year-old in Daikundi with three young children.

She used to have four. Last year, she lost her 5-month-old daughter when the child fell sick. Unable to afford a taxi, Mariam was walking her to the nearest clinic, located about an hour on foot from her home, when the child died. Now, the nearest health facility is more than twice as far away even by car. “The winter [when the region is buried under snow, restricting movement],” she tells TIME, “is even scarier.”



For midwives, the closures have robbed them of their livelihoods in what remains a severely depressed economy. “I’m getting weaker and older everyday,” Gul Chaman, a midwife in Daikundi’s Waras Valley, told TIME, fearful of what would happen once she had exhausted her savings. “I’m afraid for me and my children’s future.”

Atifa, the midwife in Melmastok, is also afraid. She says she no longer even has the supplies to work privately. It simply isn’t safe, forcing her to turn away former patients, like Soghra, a young woman in her 30s who, a week before Atifa’s clinic shut down, told TIME that she was “terrified” about giving birth.

Tragically, her worst fears were realized when she went into labor in July. With no supplies to safely assist Soghra, Atifa directed her to another clinic around two hours away by car. “I don’t know if it happened on the way or at that clinic,” Atifa says, “but she lost her child.”

Photographs by Elise Blanchard for TIME



Secondary image



“Mothers and children will die”

Atifa, the midwife whose Daikundi clinic has now been forced to close, underlines the stakes for Afghan women and children.



Secondary image



“There is no equipment, no people, no medications”

With Afghanistan’s economy still in dire straits after the international troop withdrawal in 2021, Zahrah was the sole breadwinner in her household, which includes her five young children.



Secondary image





Secondary image





Secondary image

<https://time.com/7310744>

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How We Chose the 2025 TIME100 AI

Jacobs is Editor in Chief at TIME, where he leads TIME's global newsroom and its journalism across all platforms. Since joining TIME in 2013, Jacobs has held a variety of senior editorial leadership positions. Previously, he was national political correspondent at Reuters, associate editor at Newsweek, and staff reporter for The Daily Beast. His writing has appeared in the Boston Globe and New York Observer.



Today we publish the third edition of the [TIME100 AI](#), our annual look at the most influential people in artificial intelligence. We launched this list in 2023, in the wake of OpenAI's release of ChatGPT, the moment many became aware of AI's potential to compete with and exceed the capabilities of humans. Our aim was to show how the direction AI travels will be determined not by machines but by people—innovators, advocates, artists, and everyone with a stake in the future of this technology. Our aspiration for TIME is to be your trusted guide through this transformation.

This year's list further confirms our focus on people. One of the dominant AI storylines of 2025 has been the competition over people. Investors have poured hundreds of millions into startups, reflecting the perceived value of founders, and leaders of Big Tech firms like Meta's [Mark Zuckerberg](#) have reportedly offered nine-figure deals to attract prized technologists. Those hires, accompanied by frenzied rumors, have turned the once obscure competition over AI researchers into something that better resembles professional sports free agency. The stakes for beating the competition are so high that leading researchers are courted like NBA All-Stars. (Two of Zuckerberg's noteworthy hires, [Alexandr Wang](#) and [Nat Friedman](#), join him on the 2025 TIME100 AI.)

Since we began the TIME100 AI, spending on AI-related technologies has accelerated, becoming a key driver of the global economy. Whether this is for better or for worse it is too soon to tell, but investment in computer-processing equipment is growing at nearly four times the rate of GDP. Computer scientist and 2025 honoree [Stuart Russell](#) estimates that the current planned expenditure could be 25 times the amount spent on the Manhattan Project, even adjusting for inflation. This is a historic deployment of capital, and the decisions on how to spend it are being made by many of the individuals who join the TIME100 AI community this year, including Softbank CEO [Masayoshi Son](#), OpenAI CEO [Sam Altman](#), xAI founder [Elon Musk](#), White House AI Czar [David Sacks](#), and the E.U.'s [Henna Virkkunen](#).

Also in this issue, we show how these individuals' decisions are transforming not just the technology industry but also how we live and potentially how wars will be won. Justin Worland and photographer Elliot Ross traveled to Atlanta to show how the physical spaces like data centers, which make AI possible, are [stressing our energy grids](#). And Billy Perrigo reports from Paris on the [geopolitical calculations](#) and risks that accompany the competition for achieving artificial general intelligence.



Behind the Cover: *How Artist Refik Anadol Made the 2025 TIME100 AI Cover*

The AI industry is changing rapidly. (Only 16 TIME100 AI honorees appeared previously on the list, which was overseen by Ayesha Javed.) As AI's entry into our lives has quickened, so has the volume increased of voices warning about its developments. Those voices are recognized too in this year's list, including [Pope Leo XIV](#), researcher [Yoshua Bengio](#), and French Minister [Clara Chappaz](#). It also includes artists venturing to the frontiers of what is possible, and what happens when humans and AI work together, like [Refik Anadol](#), who created this issue's cover image, and actor [Natasha Lyonne](#). “I understand the spark that AI invokes in people.

Life is scary,” Lyonne told TIME. “The fact of the matter is that it’s upon us. Best we dive in, I think.”

We are diving in at TIME too. In addition to the TIME100 AI community, we’re growing a team of reporters dedicated to covering the people and ideas powering AI. Part of their work can be found in a new newsletter, authored by Perrigo and Andrew R. Chow, called [In the Loop](#). We’re also experimenting with how AI can improve our distribution of TIME’s coverage. Our partnerships with AI companies like OpenAI have helped make TIME one of the most cited sources of information on platforms like ChatGPT. And this summer, in partnership with Scale AI, we launched our first AI audio briefings. Soon, we look forward to debuting the TIME AI Agent, which will create the most interactive and personalized reading experience ever for TIME’s trusted reporting.

<https://time.com/7312067>

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How Putin Brushed Off Trump's Latest Push for Peace in Ukraine

Shuster is a senior correspondent at TIME. He covers international affairs, with a focus on Russia and Ukraine. For his first book, *The Showman*, he reported inside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's compound in Kyiv as the Russian invasion unfolded.



The Brief August 19, 2025

Putin brushes off Trump's push for peace, why a Texas Democrat is locked in the State Capitol, and more

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It was around midnight in Moscow when Vladimir Putin took a call from the White House about the latest proposals for ending the war in Ukraine. President Donald Trump had just spent several hours in meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and seven other leaders from Europe who had come along in a frantic effort to shore up U.S. support for the Ukrainian position. Now Trump was telling Putin about what he believed needed to be the next step: The leaders of the warring sides, Trump said, should meet in person and try to make progress toward peace. Putin seemed to have other plans.

After the call, the Kremlin issued a mealy-mouthed statement, suggesting that it might be worth “exploring the possibility of raising the level of representatives” in future peace talks. Whatever that means, it seemed a long way from accepting Trump’s invitation for Putin sitting down with Zelensky. On other points, too, the Russians reverted on Monday to their familiar methods of wartime diplomacy: making threats, issuing demands, and playing for time to continue their invasion of Ukraine.

The threats from Moscow became especially aggressive when it came to the central question of Monday’s closely watched talks at the White House: How to secure any peace agreement with the Russians? Who would guarantee that peace? And by what means?

On these points, Trump seemed to move closer to the position of his European allies. “We’ll help them out with that,” he said during his press conference with Zelensky early in the day. “We will give them very good protection, very good security.” He even said the protections would be “NATO-like,” echoing the promises of several European members of the NATO alliance, who have expressed a willingness to secure any future peace deal in Ukraine using their own troops.

Those statements began to approach what President Zelensky has long been seeking: a clear commitment from the U.S. and its allies

that they would step in to defend Ukraine from any future Russian invasion. Without such a commitment from his allies, Zelensky has argued that Ukraine cannot agree to any peace deal, because it would be based on little more than Putin's word.

Trump's promise on Monday to "help out" with the future defense of Ukraine seemed like a tentative but tangible step on the path to real security guarantees. It was enough to provoke a furious response from Moscow. In another statement issued during Trump's talks in the White House on Monday, the Russian foreign ministry said that any scenario involving NATO troops coming to Ukraine's defense in the future would risk "an uncontrolled escalation of the conflict with unpredictable consequences." Any firm attempt to secure the peace, in other words, would only deepen the war.

That did not leave Trump with any clear options for advancing the peace process beyond the latest stage of Russian obstructionism. In his concluding statement on Monday, after at least five hours of talks with the visiting leaders from Europe, Trump said he "began the arrangements for a meeting" between the leaders of Russia and Ukraine. But he did not say Putin had agreed during their call to participate in any such meeting.

On the crucial question of security guarantees for Ukraine, Trump also sounded a lot more circumspect as the long day of negotiations wound down. "We discussed Security Guarantees for Ukraine, which Guarantees would be provided by the various European Countries, with a coordination with the United States of America." This sounded a lot less convincing than Trump's suggestion earlier in the day that Ukraine would receive a "NATO-like" commitment to its security.

But, given the pushback he got from the Kremlin, Trump did not have room to promise much more. Last week, after his summit with Putin in Alaska, he had already set aside his main source of

leverage over the Russians—the threat of sanctions and tariffs that could weaken Putin’s economy. “We don’t have to think about that right now,” Trump remarked.

In a TV interview on Sunday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed that the threat of sanctions against Russia was off the table for now. “I don’t think new sanctions on Russia are going to force them to accept ceasefire,” Rubio said on NBC’s [Meet the Press](#). But it wasn’t clear on Monday what other means Trump has to bring Putin to the negotiating table. Based on the Kremlin’s responses to his latest effort at securing a durable peace, the Russians would much rather let the war continue.

<https://time.com/7310543>

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‘Lone Star Lockup’ ICE Mega Detention Facility Opens Doors

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The Brief August 20, 2025

FDA warning about potentially radioactive shrimp, ICE mega detention facility opens doors, and more

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A detention center that is poised to become the largest of its kind in the country opened on a military base in El Paso, Texas, over the weekend, amid concerns over safety, costs, and a lack of transparency.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began detaining people on Sunday at the Fort Bliss facility, dubbed “Lone Star Lockup” by [its supporters](#), in what it said was an effort to “decompress ICE detention facilities in other regions.”

More than \$1 billion will be invested in the detention center to expand its current 1,000-bed capacity to hold up to 5,000 people. Immigrants who are currently in removal proceedings or final removal orders are expected to be detained at the facility.

ICE [said](#) it hoped the facility would “streamline and expedite removal processes, which is one of the Trump administration’s priorities.”

The opening of the detention center comes amid broader efforts by the Administration to militarize immigration enforcement through the use of U.S. military bases and personnel. Last week, President Donald Trump invoked emergency powers to call in the National Guard and take control of the police in Washington, D.C., due to claims about rampant crime in the city—despite a [reported](#) decline in crime rates. Nearly half of the around 300 arrests reported by the White House targeted undocumented immigrants, [according to the Washington Post](#).

And earlier this year, the President called the National Guard in Los Angeles following a series of protests by immigration advocates who opposed the raids that swept through the city.

At least two more military bases will be used to detain undocumented immigrants, [per the ACLU](#).

Construction of the detention center faced numerous setbacks due to canceled contracts and concerns about improper bidding, [according to NBC News](#).

“Under President Trump’s leadership, we are working at turbo speed on cost-effective and innovative ways to deliver on the American people’s mandate for mass deportations of criminal illegal aliens,” Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement to TIME. “ICE is indeed pursuing all available options to expand bedspace capacity. This process does include partnering with states and local government and housing detainees at certain military bases, including Fort Bliss.”

Here’s what to know about Lone Star Lockup.

ICE says this will be ‘the largest federal immigration detention center in history’—but more mega facilities are being built

“Lone Star Lockup” could become the largest federal immigration detention center in the country. But it’s just one of several new mega facilities that have recently opened, or are expected to open, as part of the Trump Administration’s mass deportation plan.

A *Washington Post* report found that ICE plans on adding more than 41,000 detention beds in 2025 through partnerships with private prison contractors, reliance on military bases, and revival of prisons that may have halted services. The agency is looking at constructing “soft-sided” facilities that can be built and taken down rapidly. Detention facilities will double in scope in Texas, which will be able to house \$38,000 people by the end of the year.

“The One Big Beautiful Bill has provided historic funding to help us carry out this mandate, especially by securing enough detention capacity to maintain an average daily population of 100,000 illegal aliens and 80,000 new ICE beds,” McLaughlin said in a statement. The bill marked the largest detention and deportation investment in U.S. history, [per the American Immigration Council](#). Forty-five

billion dollars were allocated for immigration detention in July, marking a 265% budget increase to ICE's detention budget.

The base has a troubling history

The construction of the center adds to the military base's deep history of contributing to the immigration policy of the U.S. Fort Bliss was initially [established](#) following the end of the Mexican-American War to "defend" the Southern border. The base later served as an internment camp housing both foreign nationals and U.S. citizens of Japanese descent during World War Two. More than 100,000 [people](#) were sent to various relocation centers across the U.S. in the 1940s.

Fort Bliss more recently served as an emergency shelter for thousands of unaccompanied migrant children during the Obama and Biden Administrations. In 2021, two federal employees filed a [whistleblower complaint](#) regarding the conditions of the center, citing mismanagement of childcare and public health and safety concerns.

Today, [more than](#) 36,000 military members live on the base, along with some 36,000 retirees, and their families.

Opinions on the use of Fort Bliss for immigrant detainment have generally fallen along party lines. Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas [praised](#) Fort Bliss and referred to it as an "amazing military facility" while announcing his support for the center. Republican Senator John Cornyn of Texas addressed ongoing criticism of the center by stating that the people being taken to the center would not be "gardeners or housekeepers." He added: "These are people who didn't show up to court-ordered hearings. There is no due process concern. They have no legal right to be here."

The Trump Administration initially claimed that the scope of its mass deportation would focus on criminals and violent offenders. An estimate by the Mississippi Free Press based on public Customs and Border Protection data shows that as of June 29, 72% of people [detained](#) by ICE had no criminal convictions.

Meanwhile, Democratic Rep. Veronica Escobar of Texas criticized the use of federal funding for the construction of the center. “I want you to think about how much good that money could do in El Paso if it were spent on the community, if it were spent on access to child care for El Paso kids, if it were spent on universal pre-K for El Paso kids, if it were spent on health care for El Pasoans,” she [said](#) on Monday.

The U.S. Department of Defense awarded a \$232 million up-front contract to Acquisition Logistics LLC to build the facility, which has a tent-style structure. Construction is expected to be completed by September 2027, [per the Texas Tribune](#).

Immigration officials told TIME that the facility will have all the amenities of a traditional facility, including legal representation, a law library, visitation opportunities, and a place for recreation and medical treatment. “It also provides necessary accommodations for disabilities, diet, and religious beliefs,” McLaughlin said.

Immigration advocates sound alarms

The opening of the facility was greeted by [protestors](#) calling on the Administration to ensure detainees have access to the facilities they are entitled to. Activists have sounded the alarm on the new Texas detention center, citing concerns about hot summer temperatures and potential poor conditions of the center. Some have pointed to similarities with “[Alligator Alcatraz](#),” a detention camp in the Florida Everglades. Two legal challenges against the Florida center have been filed due to reported inhumane conditions and lack of access to legal counsel for detainees.

The ACLU has argued that Fort Bliss's location in a remote area will impose similar difficulties for immigrant detainees. The organization specifically points to limited communication with legal counsel and families, and limited access to medical care. "Isolating people on military bases heightens the risk of abuse and neglect," the organization [said](#).

Sen. Cornyn, who toured the facility, has denied such concerns and [informed KFOX14](#) that Lone Star Lockup would be "humane, safe facilities and a vast improvement of what these folks are used to." El Paso County Commissioner Jackie Butler [introduced](#) a resolution in early August opposing the development of the Fort Bliss migrant center [unanimously passed](#). "The people of El Paso deserve transparency when a billion-dollar, taxpayer-funded facility is placed in their backyard," said Butler. "We don't know who will staff this facility. We don't know how detainees will be treated. And we don't know how our local law enforcement, infrastructure, and community services will be affected. That's unacceptable."

<https://time.com/7310657>

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Why So Many Women Are Quitting the Workforce

Semuels is a senior correspondent at TIME covering the consumer side of healthcare. She previously wrote about economics and business news. She is a four-time finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism, and she has won awards from the Society of Business Editors and Writers and the Los Angeles Press Club.



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What to know about a ‘flesh-eating’ bacteria, Marjorie Taylor Greene’s shift from MAGA, and more

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It's a stark number: 212,000. That's how many women ages 20 and over have left the workforce since January, according to the [most recent jobs numbers](#) released Aug. 1 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (By contrast, 44,000 men have entered the workforce since January.) The numbers show a reversal of recent trends that saw more women, especially women with children, finding and keeping full-time jobs.

Data show that between January and June, labor force participation rate of women ages 25 to 44 living with a child under five fell nearly three percentage points, from 69.7% to 66.9%, says Misty Lee Heggeness, an associate professor of economics and public affairs at the University of Kansas. It's a big reversal. The participation of those women had soared in 2022, 2023, and 2024, peaking in January 2025, as flexible work policies helped women join the workforce and generate much-needed income for their families.

Workers have seen flexibility revoked in 2025 on a large scale. President Donald Trump ordered federal employees [back to the office](#) five days a week in January, though many had negotiated remote work arrangements and some had even moved far away from their offices. [Amazon](#), [JP Morgan](#), and [AT&T](#) also returned to five days a week policies in 2025. Overall, full-time in-office requirements among Fortune 500 companies jumped to 24% in the second quarter of 2025, up from 13% in the end of 2024, according to the [Flex Index](#), which tracks remote work policies.

This has hit women with a bachelor's degree in particular; their labor-force participation rate, which had been falling for decades before the pandemic, started ticking up again in 2020, peaking at 70.3% in September in 2024. It's been falling ever since, and stood at 67.7% in July 2025, according to the most recent jobs report.

Read More: [*As People Return to Offices, It's Back to Misery for America's Working Moms*](#)

It's not a coincidence that women's participation in the workforce is falling as flexibility disappears, says Julie Vogtman, senior director of job quality for the National Women's Law Center. Women capitalized on remote work and flexibility during the pandemic and stopped exiting the labor force, [research shows](#). Now, many are not able to do so.

"Women still take on the lion's share of caregiving responsibilities, and they are more likely than men to be navigating how to meet those caregiving responsibilities while holding down a job," she says. "They are also more likely than men to feel that they have to leave the workforce when their balancing act becomes unmanageable."

Return-to-office policies are not proven to make companies more productive. One [2024 study](#) of resumes at Microsoft, SpaceX, and Apple found that return-to-office policies led to an exodus of senior employees, which posed a potential threat to competitiveness of the larger firm. And nearly two-thirds of C-suite executives said that return-to-work mandates caused a "disproportionate number" of females to quit, according to a 2024 survey conducted by Walr, a data-collection agency, on behalf of Upwork and Workplace Intelligence. Many of those CEOs who reported women quitting said they were struggling to fill jobs because of that loss of female employees and that their overall workforce productivity is down.

"When I hear about these companies making everyone go back to the office, the most normal situation is it's being ordered by some old white male person with what I call care privilege, which is that they have someone who cooks their meals, irons their clothes, or picks their kids up from daycare," says Heggeness.

Read More: [*Trump's Return-to-Office Push Is a Mistake*](#)

The disappearance of flexibility is not the only reason women are leaving the workforce in 2025. Some of the decline in participation

comes from lower-income women in jobs that have historically had to be done in person full-time, even during the pandemic. Those women are struggling because federal dollars for childcare have declined significantly in 2025. That money helped many centers stay open and charge lower tuition than they otherwise would have. [That funding ended](#) in September 2024, forcing many centers to close or raise tuition, leaving some families without options.

What's more, the mass deportations occurring throughout the country now are affecting childcare providers, about 20% of whom are immigrants, according to Vogtman. Even if workers have legal status, some may be afraid to come to work, and others may have lost their own childcare and have to stay home as a result, she says. The federal funding helped some providers keep their costs down; now, childcare expenses are rising again. The amount of money American families spent on nursery, elementary, and secondary schools fell in much of 2023 and 2024, and then started to rise again in the fourth quarter of 2024, when it jumped 3.3%, according to the [Bureau of Economic Analysis](#). It has risen every quarter in 2025..

“You have a population of working women who are finding it increasingly difficult to make the math work,” Vogtman says.

Those include many federal government workers, who may have been drawn to their jobs because government jobs were long seen as flexible, with good benefits like parental leave, says Heggeness. Research [suggests](#) that women are more likely to take a lower-paying job if there are benefits attached like telework and flexibility around timing their schedule, she says. If those jobs then experience massive layoffs—as federal workers have under Trump’s downsizing—women could be disproportionately affected.

As women leave the workforce, the Trump Administration is exploring ways to encourage women to get married and [have more children](#) in order to slow the country’s decline in birth rate. But

Heggeness suspects that forcing federal government workers back to the office makes many women choose between having children and pursuing their careers—and many might choose the latter.

“What they are doing right now, with the return-to-work policies and their leading by example, is the exact opposite of what you’d want to be doing from a policy perspective if you really care about increasing birth rates,” Heggeness says.

Of course, for some women, leaving the workforce can be a blessing, if their partners have stable jobs that provide a good income. They have more time to spend with their families, and some are freelancing or [starting their own businesses](#).

Sarah Wedge moved out of Philadelphia during the pandemic; her employment ended when her company called employees back to the office, she says, and she decided she didn’t want to move her family back. Now, she’s freelancing and spending more time with her three-year-old daughter. “I’m a mom, and that’s part of why I’ve enjoyed freelancing; it’s the whole fluid schedule that’s great,” she says.

But there are reasons to be concerned about women leaving the workforce. Without two salaries, many families struggle to afford basics like housing, food, and transportation; they have less money to spend, which means less money circulating in the economy. Their health care and other benefits are more precarious in an economy where only one partner works. Economic growth [has slowed](#) in the first half of the year; in the long term, slowing growth worsens people’s standard of living.

For many women, this is more than an economic problem: it’s a depressing reminder that the brief period of time when work-from-home reigned—when balancing family and work was actually sometimes possible—is over.

Read More: *Flexible Employers Were a Pandemic Blip*

Big picture, women's labor-force participation has stalled in the U.S. in recent decades, peaking in the early 2000s even as it rose in many countries in Europe. But then, during the pandemic, rates started rising again, as women could handle childcare pickup and dropoff and other caregiving responsibilities while working from home. Among married women, rates rose from 56.9% in Jan. 2021 to 59% in Jan. 2024.

"What is most heartbreaking about all of this is that the pandemic felt like this revolution, where they finally realized we're human beings and they'll treat us with some degree of respect," says a mother of two whose company went back to mandating three in-office workdays, but which granted her a temporary exception, meaning she is still able to work remotely full time. "In the pandemic, they were saying, 'We care about you as people, and we understand that your well-being contributes to your productivity at work,'" she says.

The mother, who does not want her name used because she doesn't want to risk her remote status, has two young children and moved to be closer to their grandparents during the pandemic. Now, she's just waiting for her company to end her employment by reversing her remote work status, which the company says can be revoked at any time for any reason. She's not willing to pick up her family and move back, but she wishes she didn't have to choose.

"There's been a shift in the zeitgeist—now, it's 'We don't care about you, and you're replaceable,'" she says. "It's like we didn't learn anything."

<https://time.com/7306896>

Remembering Apollo 13's Jim Lovell, the Most Down-to-Earth Astronaut

Kluger is an editor at large at TIME. He covers space, climate, and science. He is the author of 12 books, including *Apollo 13*, which served as the basis for the 1995 film, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for TIME's series *A Year in Space*.



Jim Lovell's job never required him to be a poet. Once the most experienced man in space flight—with two trips in the Gemini program and two lunar missions in Apollo—Lovell, who died August 7 at age 97, went places few others have gone and saw things few others had seen. But that didn't mean there was music when he spoke.

“We’re on our way, Frank,” was the best he could muster in 1965 when the engines on his Titan rocket lit and he and Frank Borman took off aboard *Gemini 7*. “Boy, boy, boy,” he said, when he and Buzz Aldrin splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean at the end of their *Gemini 12* mission in 1966. “Houston, we’ve had a problem,” he intoned when a sudden explosion crippled his *Apollo 13* spacecraft

in 1970, reporting the incident as if it were nothing more troubling than the family car running out of windshield washer fluid.

None of this was Lovell's fault. Jack Swigert, Lovell's command module pilot aboard Apollo 13, once said that the very thing that qualified astronauts to embark on such potentially mortal missions as flights to the moon—a cool, engineer's detachment from the scope of the experience and the chances they were taking—disqualified them from adopting the larger, epochal view of things. You could either go to the moon or you could appreciate the going; you couldn't do both.

And yet once, in my experience, Lovell went lyrical. It was 1995, and his and my [book](#) about his Apollo 13 mission had just been made into a [movie](#) starring Tom Hanks and directed by Ron Howard. It was a gobsmacking experience for me. I had spent my career quietly toiling as a science journalist, enjoying some recognition for my work, but nothing remotely like fame. Lovell, on the other hand, knew a thing or two about being celebrated, being feted, being recognized in restaurants and sought out for interviews. And he knew, too, that fame was ephemeral—that the public's attention could be a fickle and flickering thing. You are hailed after your splashdown; you are forgotten the next year. And so Lovell tried to offer me the benefit of his experience, decades after he had retired from the glittery astronaut corps.

“Remember where you're standing when the spotlight goes off,” he told me on the phone one day, “because no one's going to help you off the stage.”

It was wise; it was wonderful; and I held that counsel close.

Lovell wore his fame lightly—like a loose garment. He was a man of the Earth—a naval officer, a father of four, a homeowner—who just happened to have been to space. Around the time we were

finishing our book, he was planning a vacation with his wife, Marilyn, and was at a loss as to where to go.

“I’ve been to Europe,” he told me. “I’ve been to Asia and Australia and the moon and Africa.” The moon made the list, but it wasn’t even first.

Lovell took a similarly easy, workmanlike approach to all four of his space missions. His Gemini 7 flight was a long, gritty, lunch-bucket mission, with him and Borman spending 14 days aloft in a spacecraft that afforded them little more habitable volume than two commercial coach seats. There were no spacewalks for Borman and Lovell; no dramatic dockings with the uncrewed Agena target vehicle with which other Gemini crews would practice orbital maneuvering. The men were flying lab rats, sent aloft to determine if human beings could survive in space for the fortnight the longest lunar missions would last.

“It was two weeks in a men’s room,” Lovell would tell me.

That mission was enough for Borman. He did not raise his hand for any more Gemini flights and instead went straight into training for the Apollo program, with its spacious capsules and its glamorous trips to the moon. Lovell could not get enough of flying and eleven months later commanded Gemini 12, the final mission of the Gemini series, with Aldrin in the co-pilot’s seat. The men walked to their rocket with signs on their backs. Lovell’s read THE. Aldrin’s read END.

It was in the Apollo program that the workaday Lovell became the iconic Lovell. Space historians debate what the most noteworthy missions of all time are and virtually all of them would put Yuri Gagarin’s single orbit of the Earth in 1961—making him the first human being in space—on the list. After that, most would include Apollo 8, Apollo 11—the first moon landing—and Apollo 13. Lovell flew on two of them.

[Apollo 8](#) was a rhapsodic ending to a blood-soaked year. It was 1968, and in January the Tet Offensive in Vietnam began. That was followed by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the assassination of Robert Kennedy, riots exploding in cities across the country, and the violent clashes between protestors and police at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. But NASA had something fine and bracing and curative planned.

During the summer, the space agency quietly decided that before the year was out it would launch Apollo 8, with Borman, Lovell, and rookie astronaut Bill Anders aboard, into orbit around the moon. While there, the astronauts would broadcast a message home, showing the 3.5 billion people living on the Earth what their planet looked like from space and, more transformatively, what the ancient, tortured surface of the moon looked like crawling beneath the spacecraft's window. There are a lot of things that determine just when a lunar mission will fly—the readiness of the spacecraft, the training of the crew, the availability of naval forces to effectuate recovery, the relative positions of the Earth and the moon when a launch is planned, and more. For Apollo 8 all of those tumblers fell just right and NASA determined that the optimal day for the historic orbit and broadcast home would be Christmas Eve.

When that day arrived, [nearly one in every three people on the planet](#) was in front of a television set. Borman, Lovell, and Anders played their parts gracefully—describing what they were seeing and thinking and experiencing.

“The vast loneliness up here of the moon is awe-inspiring,” [Lovell said](#). “It makes you realize just what you have back on Earth. The Earth from here is a grand oasis in the big vastness of space.”

The moon, Borman added, “looks rather like clouds and clouds of pumice stone.”

“The horizon here is very, very stark,” said Anders. “The sky is pitch black and the ... moon is very bright. And the contrast between the sky and the moon is a vivid, dark line.”

The astronauts continued their lunar travelogue for a few minutes more and then—befitting the enormity of the experience, befitting the fine and slender thread that at that moment was connecting one species to two worlds, and most important befitting the season—the men concluded their broadcast with the words of Genesis.

“And God called the light day and the darkness He called night,” Lovell said when it was his turn to read. “And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. And let it divide the waters from the waters.’”

Borman and Anders read from the ancient verse too, and then Borman, as commander, concluded the broadcast. “And from the crew of Apollo 8,” he said, “we close with good night, good luck, a merry Christmas, and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth.”



Borman, Lovell, and Anders came back to ticker tape parades, an appearance before Congress, a world good-will tour. TIME named them Men of the Year for 1968. A photograph Anders took of the Earth rising above the surface of the moon would be credited with sparking the environmental movement and would be hailed as one of the most important photos ever taken.

Borman and Anders needed no more of space and no more of fame; both men quietly retired from the astronaut corps. History would note that Lovell did not. In April 1970, he was set to fly Apollo 13, a mission that would have been NASA's third moon landing. But history would deny Lovell the opportunity to get his boots dirty when an explosion in an on-board oxygen tank crippled the lunar

mothership, making a landing impossible and turning the mission of exploration to one of survival.

Lovell would successfully steer his broken ship home, bringing himself, Swigert, and crewmate Fred Haise back alive. There would be talk—briefly—of giving the man who had twice been to the moon but had never been able to walk on it another chance at yet another mission. But Lovell knew his time in space was up. There were too many other astronauts competing for a seat on the few Apollo missions remaining to let one man fly three times. And Lovell could not—would not—subject Marilyn, whom the exploding oxygen tank had nearly widowed, to yet one more launch, one more mission, one more roll of the mortal dice.

Marilyn is now gone, [predeceasing Jim](#) by nearly two years. Jim is now gone too. But they endure. During Apollo 8, Lovell spotted a small, pretty, triangular mountain at the edge of the moon's Sea of Tranquility that he named Mount Marilyn. The other astronauts took up the name and in 2017, the [International Astronomical Union](#), which governs official space nomenclature, broke its rule requiring features or objects named after people to be named posthumously, and recognized Mount Marilyn. My family sent Marilyn flowers and she sweetly called with her thanks.

Over the years, I enjoyed the hospitality of the Lovells on a handful of occasions, staying in their home in Lake Forest, Illinois—once with my daughters who delighted in Jim's tour of the [Chicago Museum of Science and Industry](#), where Apollo 8 is on display, and where he leaned close to Anders' earthrise picture with them and explained how it was taken. In one of the rooms in the Lovell home is a small bronzed baby shoe that Lovell the explorer wore when he was just Lovell the baby. I couldn't help thinking how rich and complete it would be to have a bronzed lunar boot next to it. But the foot that wore the baby shoe never did touch the moon.

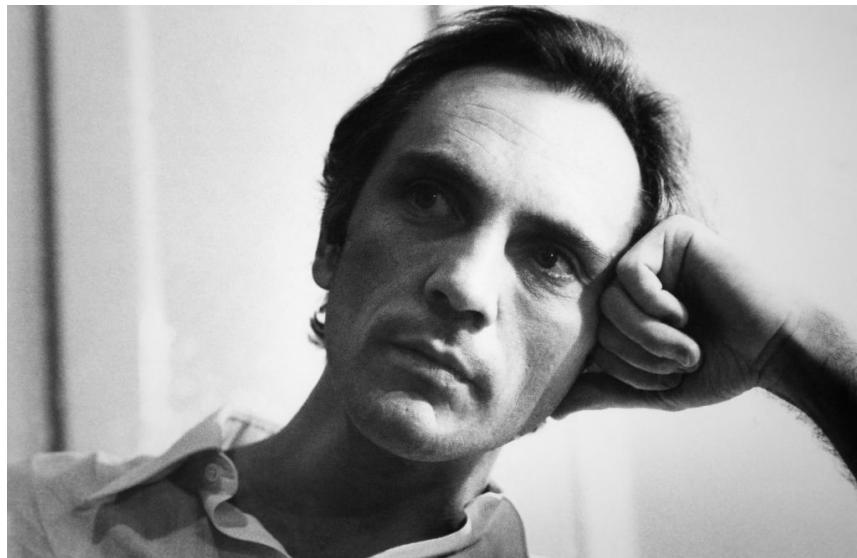
That fickle spotlight Jim warned me about has now shone its last on him. He has left the stage—and we are left poorer for his absence.

<https://time.com/7308675>

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British Actor Terence Stamp Remembered for His ‘Unforgettable Characters’—From General Zod to Priscilla

De Guzman is a reporter at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. He covers the Asia-Pacific region and global overnight news.

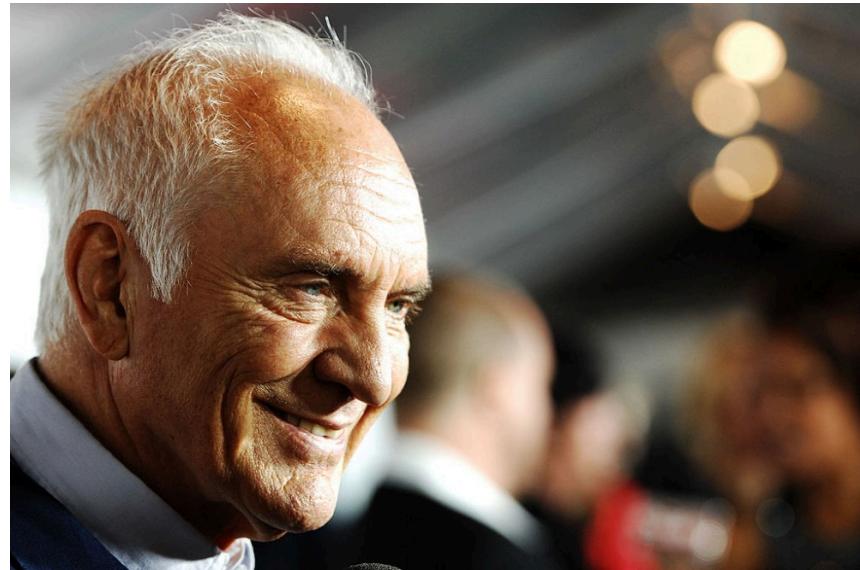


“My only regrets,” the Oscar-nominated British actor Terence Stamp once said, “are the films that I passed on because I was fearful.”

Stamp, who was best known for starring as the villain General Zod in *Superman* (1978) and *Superman II* (1980), has often called turning down the lead role in the 1967 Oscar-winning movie adaptation of Broadway hit *Camelot*—because he wasn’t confident in his ability to sing—his biggest regret.

But the actor, who died Sunday at age 87, took on no shortage of fearless roles later in his career and even got the opportunity to overcome his [trepidation](#) about singing onscreen when he starred in the 2012 film *Song for Marion*, earning a Best Actor nomination at

the British Independent Film Awards for his portrayal of a widower in a seniors' choir.



Stamp's family confirmed his death in a statement to [Reuters](#), saying that he "leaves behind an extraordinary body of work, both as an actor and as a writer that will continue to touch and inspire people for years to come."

Described by [the Guardian](#) as the "seductive dark prince of British cinema," Stamp had a film career that spanned decades. He was also a prolific writer, authoring five memoirs as well as a fiction novel and co-authoring two cookbooks.

"Terence was kind, funny, and endlessly fascinating," said Edgar Wright, who directed Stamp in the 2021 film *Last Night in Soho*, in an [Instagram tribute](#) to the late actor. "Terence was a true movie star: the camera loved him, and he loved it right back."

Bill Duke, who acted alongside Stamp in Steven Soderbergh's 1999 film *The Limey*, [posted](#) on Facebook that Stamp "brought a rare intensity to the screen" but "carried himself with warmth, grace, and generosity" off-screen. Stamp's artistry, Duke said, "left an indelible mark on cinema, and his spirit will live on through the unforgettable characters he gave us."

Billy Budd and (almost) James Bond

Stamp was born on July 22, 1938, in the Stepney area of London's East End. He was one of five children. According to the [British Film Institute \(BFI\)](#), Stamp's interest in acting began after his mother took him to a local cinema to watch the 1939 film *Beau Geste*, though his father, a merchant navy stoker, had encouraged him to pursue something more practical.

“When I asked for career guidance at school, they recommended bricklaying as a good, regular job, although someone did think I might make a good Woolworths manager,” Stamp [told](#) British newspaper *the Independent* in 2011.

After studying on scholarship at the Webber Douglas School of Dramatic Art, according to the [BFI](#), Stamp would first tour in repertory theater. He appeared in a 1960 episode of the BBC series *Spy-Catcher*, according to [his IMDb profile](#), but he first gained global prominence after portraying an 18th-century seaman in the film adaptation of Herman Melville's novel *Billy Budd* in 1962. That drama directed by Peter Ustinov earned him an Academy Award nomination as well as a Golden Globe Award for “New Star Of The Year.”



Throughout the 1960s, Stamp worked with renowned British filmmakers like Ken Loach and John Schlesinger as well as Italians like Federico Fellini and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Stamp earned fame not only for his work, but also for his high-profile romances during that decade, including with supermodel Jean Shrimpton and actor Julie Christie.

At one point, Stamp was even considered to be the next James Bond after Sean Connery, though he [said](#) in a 2013 interview with *the London Evening Standard* that he scared the filmmakers behind the popular spy franchise with his ideas for how to make the role his own.

But just as Stamp felt he was entering his prime, work started to dry up. Stamp [recalled](#) to *the Guardian* in 2015 his agent telling him when he was only 31 or 32 that the movie studios were all “looking for a young Terence Stamp.”

“When the 60s ended, I almost did too,” he [said](#). In 1969, Stamp moved to an ashram in India. “I thought I’m not going to stay around here facing this day-in-day-out rejection and the phone not ringing,” he [told](#) the BFI in 2013, looking back on that period in his life.

General Zod and *The Adventures of Priscilla*

Stamp was in India when he received a now-famous telegram addressed to “Clarence Stamp” that would lead to his most recognized role of his career. It was an invitation to meet with director Richard Donner to join the ensemble cast, including Christopher Reeve and Marlon Brando, of a blockbuster adaptation of DC comic *Superman*.

Stamp received widespread acclaim for his portrayal of the Kryptonian villain General Zod in the 1978 film and its 1980 sequel and [said](#) in 2013 that he “can’t go out on the street in London without somebody saying, ‘It’s Zod!’”

Sarah Douglas, who played fellow villain Ursa in the films, remembered the late Stamp on [Instagram](#) as “beyond gorgeous and talented,” adding: “What a start to my career to have spent so many months in his company.”



Stamp told BFI that the “great blessing” of this next phase of his career was that he’d been “transmuted from a leading man to a character actor.”

Throughout the decades that followed, he was praised by critics for his performances, particularly in crime thrillers *The Hit* (1984) and *The Limey* (1999).

But he appeared in a multitude of genres, and many consider his star turn in the 1994 Australian film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, to be a standout example of his creativity and dedication to his craft. Departing from his traditionally hardman roles, Stamp portrayed transgender woman Bernadette alongside co-stars Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce as drag queens. The endearing comedy became a cult classic, and Stamp earned his second BAFTA and Golden Globe nominations for his performance.



“You were a true inspiration, both in & out of heels,” Pearce [posted](#) on X after Stamp’s passing.

Stamp’s work would continue on in the 2000s and 2010s, with roles in films like *The Adjustment Bureau*, *Valkyrie*, *Big Eyes*, and the movie adaptation of *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*.

Before Stamp’s passing, *Priscilla* director Stephan Elliott [told](#) *the Guardian* last year that Stamp was slated to return with Weaving and Pearce for a sequel, with a script already finished.

Elliott [described](#) Stamp to *the Guardian* as someone who had left a lasting impression on him since he first saw Stamp in 1965 thriller

The Collector. “Terence’s greatest beauties were his eyes—in some of the early films you don’t see it, but in person, when they were shining, he could hold a room,” Elliott said. “He’d show up, use the eyes and turn everybody to jelly.”

Elliott also noted how Stamp became more discerning with his roles later in his career. “If he’d already seen something like it, he didn’t care. If something pressed his buttons and piqued his interest, he’d consider it,” Elliott said. Elliott remembered marveling at all the notable directors and actors Stamp got to work with throughout his career. “He said to me, ‘I just drifted from one to the other—if somebody had something interesting, I’d do it. That’s the way it’s always been.’”

<https://time.com/7310249>

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Poor People Are America's Swing Voters

Barber is president of Repairers of the Breach and co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. He is author of *We Are Called to Be a Movement*.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is author of *Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good*.



In January, while the world waited to see what a second Donald Trump Presidency would look like, photos from the Inauguration offered a snapshot of what was to come. Some of the [wealthiest people in the world](#) joined politicians in the Capitol rotunda to mark the beginning of the Trump regime while everyone else was locked out in the cold. Six months later, Congress passed one of the largest [transfers of wealth](#) from low-income people to the rich in history. As lawmakers go home for their August recess, the record is clear: the White House and Congress are working hand-in-hand to serve the interests of elites at the expense of everyday Americans.

On the one hand, this is the worst of times: power is concentrated in the hands of people who pray at the opening of Congress, then act to prey on the people they swore an oath to serve. But a close look at voter demographics and the failure of both Democrats and Republicans to engage poor voters in recent decades suggests that a small percentage of poor voters who understand that they are losing their [health insurance](#), [nutrition assistance](#), and [rural hospitals](#) because of their political leadership have the potential to upend American politics.

Over the past four decades, as [inequality has grown exponentially for all Americans](#), the number of poor and [low-income white people](#)—66 million in 2018—has swelled higher than any other demographic. This is one reason low-income, majority white communities became susceptible to the “populist” appeal of the MAGA movement. If white people are hurting, the [divide-and-conquer myths](#) suggests, it must be because Black people or immigrants are taking from them. By leaning into an aggressive investment in extreme [ICE raids](#), Trump’s regime has bet the farm on this myth.

But the reality of American politics is that, despite these appeals, most poor people *don’t* vote against their own interests. While Trump improved in 2024 among low-income voters who cast a ballot in the election, [new data](#) from Lake Research Associates makes clear that the real change was in the number of poor and low-income people who decided not to vote in the race between Trump and Harris. More than 19 million “Biden Skippers” who helped elect President Joe Biden in 2020 didn’t show up in 2024. When asked why, nearly a third said their number one reason for not voting was that they didn’t feel like the Democrats’ message spoke to their economic situation.

When asked, these “Biden skippers” were not disinterested in politics. Far from it, nearly half say they check the news more than once a day and the majority favor Democrats in a generic match-

up. What they want is a candidate who speaks to them, commits to fight for them, and presents an economic agenda that they know would make a difference in their lives.

Poor people are not driving the extremism in American politics, nor are they the true base for Trump, whose major policy achievement has been to [cut government programs](#) that serve everyday people so he can give tax breaks to corporations and wealthy Americans. Poor and low-income Americans are, in fact, the largest swing vote in the country. We need a movement to engage poor people who haven't voted because they've never imagined the system could work for them. As they begin to feel the impact of the cuts from Trump's big ugly budget bill, poor and low-income people must organize to demand candidates who will represent them.

Movements that bring poor people together across lines of race and region can build on America's history of moral fusion movements to strengthen democracy for all of us. In our book [*White Poverty*](#), we wrote about how the 2018 midterms saw a roughly 10% increase in voter participation over the previous midterms—a larger four-year-increase than Obama's record-breaking turnout in 2008. Many factors contributed to this surge in participation, but a raw number increase in low-income voters made a significant contribution to the “blue wave” that returned control of the U.S. House to Democrats in 2018 and put a check on Trump's use of the White House to reward elite interests and undermine policies that lift poor people in 2020.

A movement can change how candidates talk and what agenda they promise to pursue when elected. Democrats need a new wave of leadership that not only articulates a vision for how government can serve everyday people, but also demonstrates that they are committed to use executive action, change courts, and use power when they are in office to win policies that lift from the bottom so everyone can rise.

If a moral fusion movement, led by poor and low-income people, can rise up in America today, we have the numbers to change the political conversation. This is why we have organized [Moral Mondays across the South](#) to go to the districts that will be hurt first and worst by cuts to healthcare and organize people who will be directly impacted to speak directly to their representatives with clergy and moral leaders by their side. A movement led by these people, linking arms across racial lines and joining hands with progressive allies, could not only decide the Presidential elections, but many Congressional and other statewide races as well.

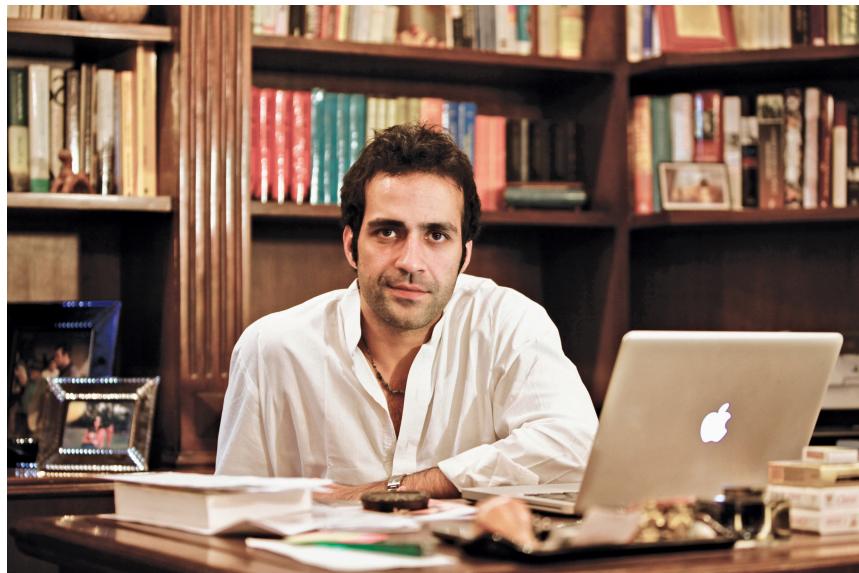
Poor and low-income people make up [a third](#) of the U.S. electorate —more than 40% of the electorate in the swing states that will decide the 2026 midterms. It's time for poor people of every race to reject the myths that have been used to divide us and come together to demand an economy that works for all of us. Such a movement isn't only good news for the poor. It's the best hope for American democracy.

Adapted from [White Poverty: How Exposing Myths About Race and Class Can Reconstruct American Democracy](#), by William J. Barber with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Liveright), out in paperback August 5, 2025.

<https://time.com/7307430>

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In Exile, I Lost India But Gained a Home



On November 7, 2019, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked my Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), effectively [banning me](#) from the country I grew up in. India was where my mother and grandmother lived. Where four out of my five books of fiction and nonfiction were set. Where I had moved back after college in the United States with the aim of being “an Indian writer.”

The government alleged I had concealed that my father was Pakistani. It was a surprising accusation. My first book—*Stranger to History: A Son’s Journey through Islamic Lands*, which was published in 2009—dealt extensively with my relationship to my absent father and my rediscovery of him. I had written countless articles on the subject, not to mention that my father was a public figure. In 2011, as governor of Punjab, Pakistan’s largest province, he was assassinated by his own bodyguard for defending a Christian woman accused of blasphemy. His [killing](#) was on the front page of the *New York Times*.

None of this affected my position in India, where I lived for over 30 years. I became “Pakistani” the day I wrote a story for the cover of TIME Magazine entitled “[India’s Divider in Chief](#),” which appeared in 2019, in the run-up to Modi’s re-election. TIME (where I began my career as a reporter in 2003) has powerful name recognition in India. The sight of its famous red masthead enclosing a scowling image of India’s leader produced a visceral reaction within the country. Modi’s army of internet trolls came after me with threats, abuse and digital vandalism. If in the past authoritarian regimes sought to destroy your person, they now first destroy your reputation. Then Modi [himself spoke](#), “TIME Magazine is foreign. The writer has also said he comes from a Pakistani political family. That is enough for his credibility.”

After that, I was on borrowed time—though, of course, none of this is new. The weaponization of citizenship documents against critics is something we see now in the U.S. too, most notably in the case of student activist [Mahmoud Khalil](#), who was detained by ICE for more than three months in the beginning of the year and released in June.

In India, I was an early test case. There have been over 100 such [cancellations reported](#) since. After I surrendered my OCI, I was blacklisted and could not receive a simple tourist visa. Nothing—not my Indian upbringing, not my contribution to Indian letters, not my ageing mother and grandmother—could save me.

Read More: [I am Indian. Why Is the Government Sending Me Into Exile?](#)

There is something debilitating about losing one’s country. It is so intimately tied up with our sense of self that we don’t know how fundamental it is till it’s gone. “I do not ‘love’ Germany,” wrote Sebastian Haffner in 1939 in *Defying Hitler* soon after leaving Nazi Germany for Britain, “just as I do not ‘love’ myself.” But “one’s

country,” Haffner continued, “plays a different and far more indispensable role than that of a mistress; it is just one’s country. If one loses it, one almost loses the right to love any other country.”

My relationship to India was instinctive. It formed the understructure of my creative life, a kind of zero-point from which I measured my distance to all other places. I could enumerate the reasons why I was Indian, but the beauty of belonging is that it is unspoken. To make the case for why one belongs is, as with certain fundamental rights, to articulate what one never meant to surrender.

I was the result of a love affair between an Indian journalist and a Pakistani politician. The affair (and my birth out of wedlock) shocked my conservative Sikh grandparents. Yet my maternal grandparents embraced me and my mother soon after my father abandoned us. It was my Nani who brought me on her back to India when I was two and her unquestioning love that instilled in me my sense of place and belonging. Modi’s action against me felt like a betrayal of that love. Her husband, my grandfather, was an officer in the Indian Army and had fought against Pakistan in two wars. I thought of how outraged she would be to learn that the child who had grown up in her house had been recast as an enemy alien. She died last year, in 2024, with me unable to see her in her final years.

India is lost to me in one sense—I cannot go home—but it is lost to countless others in another, more important sense too. In India, the demands of blood and soil are now pitted against the exalted idea of a more secular country. India’s founders, after the country’s [1947 Partition](#) along religious lines, were determined never to let it become a “Hindu Pakistan.” Its first Prime Minister, [Jawaharlal Nehru](#), envisioned India as a palimpsest, where “layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer has completely hidden or erased what has been written previously.” For men like Nehru and [Mahatma Gandhi](#), the modern nation was to be a repository of the dizzying multiplicity of

cultures, languages, religions and ethnicities that had permeated Indian soil for 5,000 years. India was a collage of states, each the size of a large European country, with languages, scripts and literatures of its own. It was held together not by the domination of a single group, but rather by its asymmetries. “The centrifugal forces of India are old and powerful,” wrote the Mexican writer Octavio Paz in *In light of India*, “they have not destroyed the country because, without intending to, they have neutralized one another.”

Beneath this great Indian variety, there lay an underlying unity—India was [85% Hindu](#)—but it was interestingly *not* a homogeneity. It was something that had never fully been exploited for political purposes, in part because it was felt that India’s Hindus had more in common with their regional Muslim and Christian counterparts—of which there are some 170 million and 28 million, respectively—than they did with each other. The idea of a “Hindu vote,” like a “white vote” in the United States, was regarded as something of a chimera. This is simply no longer true. Modi’s triumph, as a politician, is that he has been able to galvanize India’s roughly 1 billion Hindus behind the notion of India as a holy land. Long before Trump and his MAGA acolytes, Modi understood how the primal power of blood could be deployed against the delicate bloom of ideas and abstractions. His success at remaking India as an ethno-national entity has left many who believed in Nehru and Gandhi’s vision of India in what used to be described in the [Soviet-era](#) as “internal émigrés”—those who were physically present but culturally exiled.

Read More: [*How India’s Hindu Nationalists Are Weaponizing History Against Muslims*](#)

“Exile is a writer’s natural state,” the author Jeet Thayil told the Indian press when asked about what the Indian government had done to me. It is a romantic idea, bringing to mind so many writers

and painters, from James, Nabokov, and Joyce to Goya, Chagall, and Dalí, who were fed as artists by the experience—now imposed, now voluntary—of not being able to return home. But for each of these artists, there are countless others who lack the inner resources needed to be away so long from their friends and family—not to say, their material—and for whom exile is arid and sterile. “It cannot be said that they prospered here,” writes [Hisham Matar](#) in his novel, *My Friends*, describing the state of Arab intelligentsia in the United Kingdom. “If anything, they withered, grew old and tired. London was, in a way, where Arab writers came to die.”

I was not sure what exile would do to me, but, as the reality of not being able to go home set in, an unexpected emotion crept over me: relief. The burden of trying to fit into India, of forever apologizing for its shortcomings, apologizing for my own Westernization, was suddenly lifted from me.

My husband, whom I met in New York the summer of 2014, after the election that brought Modi to power, remembers how strenuous my assertions of belonging were at the time. The more I stressed my Indianness, the more he doubted it was real. As someone who had grown up in Evangelical Tennessee and come to live on the East Coast, he was suspicious of claims of authenticity, whether they be of the “real” India, or the “real” America. “Don’t forget,” he once told me of his folks back home, “that as much as we live in a bubble here, they live in a bubble, too.”

The demands of belonging that India made on me must have been hard on my husband. Not just my absences, but my need to forever balance two (if not three) societies in my head. I remember him asking me once to “unpack”—to not live as if my life in America were provisional.

Then suddenly, one day, I woke up to find it was the only life I had. Once India closed behind me, I felt strangely free. I felt my old curiosities return, many of which I had discarded in order to better

belong in India. I could revel, for instance, in my love of the English language, the locus of so much postcolonial anxiety in India, without fearing that I was somehow letting down the side.

The West, in turn, was no longer some dirty secret that I could enjoy only at the detriment of the “real” India. After all the wringing of wrists, the stewing over questions of place, of feeling myself forever betwixt and between, I found I was easier in my own skin. I no longer felt answerable to an imagined country out there whose claims on “realness” exceeded my own. My circumstances had forced a natural cosmopolitanism on me, and I was not prepared to sacrifice that for anyone. I was home.

Excerpted from [A Return to Self: Excursions in Exile](#) by Aatish Taseer. Copyright © 2025 by Aatish Taseer. Reprinted by permission of Catapult Books.

<https://time.com/7297264>

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Does Sleeping on a Problem Really Work?

Kluger is an editor at large at TIME. He covers space, climate, and science. He is the author of 12 books, including *Apollo 13*, which served as the basis for the 1995 film, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for TIME's series *A Year in Space*.



The Brief August 11, 2025

Australia to recognize Palestinian statehood, Cambodia nominates Trump for Nobel Peace Prize, and more

Podcast ID – Short Length: 4bde4458-2818-4f05-8ee8-9164283706a0

Podcast ID – Long Length: 4bde4458-2818-4f05-8ee8-9164283706a0

The busy box that is your brain is hard at work all day long—and it doesn't quit when you're asleep. Not only does your brain fill your slumber with dreams, it also goes right on solving the problems

that plagued you during the day, often coming up with solutions by the time you wake up.

The idea of sleeping on a problem and seeing if you can get some clarity in the morning is a common one, but is it scientifically sound? A growing body of research says yes.

The latest piece of evidence that sleeping on a problem actually works comes courtesy of [a small study](#) recently published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*. A group of 25 people did a memorization task while wired up to an electroencephalograph (EEG) and magnetoencephalography (MEG) so the researchers could monitor which portions of their brains lit up as they worked. Everyone then took an afternoon nap, with brain sensors still in place.

The researchers were looking for [sleep spindles](#): bursts of activity that occur in the brain during a relatively light stage of sleep. The location of the spindles can provide a clue as to what kind of information the brain is consolidating and processing at any particular time.

Read More: [Why Do Some People Need More Sleep Than Others?](#)

Spindle activity was especially high in the same areas of the brain that were used in the memorization task, and the greater the activity, the more people improved at the task when they tried it after the nap. “Brain rhythms occur everywhere in the brain during sleep,” said Dara Manoach, professor of psychiatry at Harvard University Medical School and a coauthor of the study, in a [statement](#) that accompanied its release. “But the rhythms in these regions increase after learning, presumably to stabilize and enhance memory.”

Alyssa Sinclair, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, found something similar in a [study](#) published last year. After sleeping on a difficult task, people were more level-

headed the next day. “When we waited, when we let them sleep on it, they made somewhat more rational choices,” she says. “They were no longer quite as drawn to evaluating events based solely on their first impressions.”

This more measured take on things is due in large part to the region of the brain known as the [hippocampus](#), which is responsible for processing short-term memories and, during sleep, for helping to determine which of those memories will be transferred to long-term storage and which will essentially be deleted.

“When we’re asleep,” says Sinclair, “the hippocampus is hard at work, consolidating those memories and experiences from throughout the day. It does this by replaying things that were important and pruning away the things that weren’t.”

Read More: [*How to Be More Spontaneous As a Busy Adult*](#)

The hippocampus is not alone in handling this work. Once it is done choosing the most relevant experiences, it transfers the keepers to the [neocortex](#), where long-term memories are stored and integrated with existing memories. Those two brain regions do more than just file or trash information. They also analyze it—turning it this way and that and making connections that may not have been entirely obvious when we first encountered the information. It’s during sleep that this process often takes place.

“[Sleep is critical](#) for problem-solving, creativity, and emotional regulation,” says Daniela Grimaldi, a research associate professor at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine. “Deep sleep, also called slow-wave sleep...provides the optimal conditions for this memory transfer to occur efficiently, ensuring that important experiences and learning are preserved, while less critical information is filtered out.”

“Your mind engages in informational alchemy,” says Matthew Walker, professor of neuroscience at the University of California, Berkeley, and the author of the book *Why We Sleep*, “reassembling memory fragments into a novel set of associations and colliding them with the back-catalogue of stored information.”

Deep sleep is not the only phase that plays a role in problem-solving and memory consolidation. The lightest of the [four phases](#) of sleep, known as [N1 \(for non-rapid eye movement stage one\)](#), can also yield profound cognitive benefits. One 2023 [study](#) in *Science Advances* found that when people were presented with a complex math problem, they tripled their chances of solving it if they spent as little as 15 seconds in N1 sleep after being exposed to the problem.

“Our findings suggest that there is a creative sweet spot within the sleep-onset period,” the researchers wrote, “and hitting it requires individuals balancing falling asleep easily against falling asleep too deeply.”

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None of this suggests that the conscious mind is a secondary player in learning and integrating and consolidating information. The cognitive muscle work of creativity—of art and scientific research and philosophical insight—is all conducted by wide-awake thinkers. But when the lights go off and consciousness winks out, another, deeper process goes to work.

“Creative problem solving improves after a period of sleep,” says Sinclair, “which helps us piece together those threads of what we’ve been thinking about, filter out irrelevant information, and come to a better conclusion when we wake up the next day.”

It's possible to improve our chances of benefitting from all of that nocturnal work our brains are doing—if we know how. "Dream memories vanish rapidly upon waking, making instant recording crucial," says Walker. "Keeping a dream journal or voice recorder bedside helps immensely. Upon waking, remain still with eyes closed for a moment, allowing dreams and insights to crystallize before the demands of daily life crowd them out. By creating this gentle routine, you enhance your chances of retaining the solutions your sleeping brain—through its unique informational alchemy—has woven overnight."

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U.S. Enters Uncharted Waters With Next Jobs Report

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In normal times, the first Friday of the month brings a routine tranche of government data known as the [monthly jobs report](#). The markets react, the politicians preen, and most Americans go about their day trying to just get to the weekend around the corner.

But these are not normal times, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics is no longer in the safe zone of non-partisanship thanks to President Donald Trump's [decision](#) to [can](#) its chief because he didn't like the math. Last Friday, Trump summarily fired Bureau of Labor Statistics commissioner Erika McEntarfer after her team of stats fiends [revised](#) downward the job numbers for May and June. True

to form, Trump decided the revisions were an effort to embarrass him and **stoked** conspiracy **theories** that it was a plot to rig spreadsheets. It was the equivalent of firing a National Weather Service meteorologist because he spotted a hurricane and said something about it.

This is a **shocking** development that is about so much **more** than a headcount of Americans showing up to work. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, an independent shop inside the Department of Labor and run by a Senate-confirmed geek, is a warehouse of quants whose products **shape** everything from interest rates, investments payouts, contracts, and businesses' choices. The BLS is a 2,000-strong army of nerds who have a huge—but quiet—**sway** over the global economy based in large part on the confidence that they don't cook the books.

On Sept. 5, the federal government will release its first jobs report since Trump fired McEntarfer. The reaction to those numbers is likely to be colored by the recent upheaval. If, say, the next BLS report shows hiring surged in August, will investors in the U.S. and around the globe even believe it? In chasing an immediate rush, Trump may have just denied himself a victory lap in yet another self-own.

Thousands of **invisible**, far-reaching decisions flow from the stream of reports the BLS compiles. When faith in the government product is shaken, things go off-the-rails in short order; just look at how anti-science sentiments **prolonged** the Covid 19 pandemic, and helped set in motion a broader drop in vaccine rates.

Trump's predecessors largely prioritized stability over showmanship, understanding the importance of projecting a steady hand from Washington since World War II reset the global order. Many of Trump's capricious choices—from his trade- and tariff-war tantrums to his repeatedly threatening to fire the Federal Reserve chairman—are undermining that perception. Many global

leaders now see U.S. influence as shrinking, as so many of the country's decisions seem to have no obvious strategic aim other than serving Trump's lust for chaos and affirmation.

Around Washington, the daily [whiplash](#) has become [routine](#). But the BLS shift is something altogether new. Even though Presidents might not always like the report that crosses their desk each month, they could have confidence that they were getting an as-accurate-as-possible snapshot of the economy. The same can be said for Wall Street, which counts on the ledger to be an apolitical barometer.

"Good data helps not just the Fed, it helps the government, but it also helps the private sector," said Fed Chair Jay Powell two days before McEntarfer was sacked. "The United States has been a leader in that for 100 years."

With his abrupt [firing](#) last week, Trump threatens that standard. As Trump considers naming a new BLS chief as soon as this week, it's presumed he is looking for someone who shares his belief that only information that paints him as a success is acceptable. It's a huge risk, one that [historically](#) has never worked out. The Greek debt crisis was the result of a Potemkin set of books, Argentina's default on international loans was the byproduct of fictional inflation numbers.

Going further back in history shows the vital role government statisticians often play in keeping leaders accountable. In 1937, Josef Stalin had his census chief shot and [killed](#) when his numbers contradicted what the Soviet leader had advertised. The unflattering numbers were buried in the Soviet archives until 1989.

Trump has long fetishized such strong-man bravado, but he also craves the approval of Wall Street, which has a thing for accurate, stable, and honest data. If they're looking to Trump-blessed statisticians for those numbers, they might soon find themselves

suddenly skeptical of a report that, until Trump decided to politicize it, was an indispensable service that Washington produced for decades with little drama.

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The EPA's Anti-Climate Move Leaves Industry Confused

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It's hard to think of a policy move that could more directly target the core of climate science than the Trump Administration's decision to undo the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Endangerment Finding this week. The Endangerment Finding, reached by the EPA in 2009, outlines how greenhouse gas emissions threaten public health and welfare—thereby laying out the legal basis for the agency to regulate those pollutants.

As wonky as it may be, the finding is the linchpin of EPA climate regulation affecting everything from automobiles to power plants. Successfully undoing it would help the administration swiftly undo a whole slew of climate rules.

To underpin the decision undoing the endangerment finding, the Department of Energy released an accompanying report the same day launching a full frontal assault on the scientific consensus on climate change. To do so, it relied on the analysis of a handful of scientists widely known for views that question the proven role humans play causing climate change. Undoing the endangerment finding was a move so bold that in the first Trump term the administration had flirted with the idea before abandoning it as too extreme.

In the hours that followed the July 29 announcement, my inbox was filled with statements decrying it as “devastating” and “reckless”—and for understandable reasons.

But the precise effects of the attempted roll back are difficult to predict. For one, it isn’t immediately obvious that the rollback will survive the inevitable litigation that will challenge it—even with an increasingly conservative judiciary. The faulty scientific basis for the decision is one reason. Another is the legal precedent established in the 2007 *Massachusetts vs. EPA* decision that gave the EPA the authority to regulate greenhouse gases if they endanger public health. And, finally, Congress included language in the [Inflation Reduction Act](#) that clarified that greenhouse gas emissions count as pollutants. That language remains on the books even after President Trump’s [One Big Beautiful Bill](#) gutted the law.

In the years that it will take for that litigation to play out, companies will be left in a state of confusion. Will they ultimately have to comply with some version of existing regulations if courts don’t side with the Trump Administration? Will a future administration impose even more stringent regulations, thereby harming firms that decided to ditch their climate work? And will states try to make up for the loss with regulations of their own?

In the short term at least, large companies will tread carefully in response to the new uncertainty. In the longer term, we can expect

a whole constellation of factors—from tighter regulation in foreign markets to technology developments—to provide an incentive for lower emissions technologies. At some point, perhaps, Congress might even craft legislation that gives more direct guidance on how the EPA should regulate greenhouse gases.

I don't say any of this to diminish the decision's weight. It is certainly significant that, as the costs of climate change become more evident, the U.S. federal government would offer such an egregious attack on climate science. Nonetheless, EPA regulations aren't the primary driver pushing companies to decarbonize. And they aren't the only determining factor shaping the trajectory of U.S. emissions as it was assumed 16 years ago when the endangerment finding was adopted. Large companies are subject to regulations globally. Moreover, technological advances mean that energy systems are, in general, getting cleaner and greener because of economics. Nixing the endangerment finding is a roadblock, but it's not the end of the story.

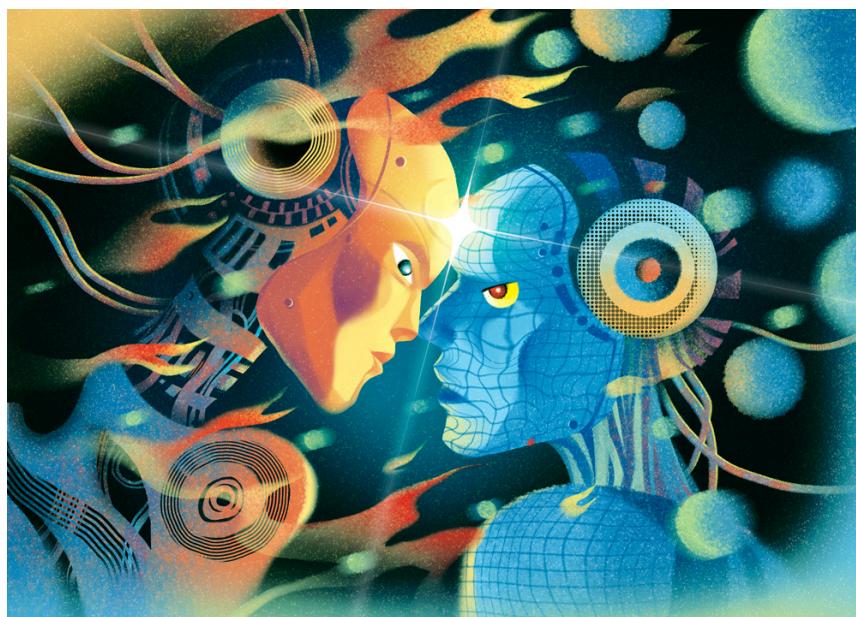
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The Race for Artificial General Intelligence Poses New Risks to an Unstable World

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Under a crystal chandelier in a high-ceilinged anteroom in Paris, the moderator of *Intelligence Rising* is reprimanding his players. These 12 former government officials, academics, and artificial intelligence researchers are here to participate in a simulated exercise about AI’s impact on geopolitics. But just an hour into the simulation, things have already begun to go south.

The team representing the U.S. has decided to stymie Chinese AI development by blocking all chip exports to China. This has raised the odds, the moderator says, of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan: the U.S. ally that is home to the world’s most advanced chip-manufacturing plants. It is 2026, and the simulated world is on the

brink of a potentially devastating showdown between two nuclear superpowers.

Why? Because each team is racing to create what's known as artificial general intelligence, or AGI: an AI system so good, it can perform almost any task better, cheaper, and faster than a person can. Both teams believe getting to AGI first will deliver them unimaginable power and riches. Neither dares contemplate what horrors their rival might visit upon them with that kind of strength.

While this scenario might seem far-fetched, many insiders say it is anything but. Top technologists now believe that AGI is within touching distance. Sam Altman, the CEO of ChatGPT maker OpenAI, expects the first AGI to be created during President Trump's second term in office. OpenAI, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and Meta are together funneling hundreds of billions of dollars—the equivalent cost in today's dollars of a dozen Manhattan Projects per year—into the construction of huge data centers where they believe AGI will be summoned into existence.

Artificial general intelligence, believers say, could far surpass human limitations: it could have expert knowledge in all fields, not just one or two; it could complete in minutes complex tasks that take human workers hours or even weeks; and it could be replicated, thus enabling the creation of virtual armies of AI "agents." That kind of computational intelligence could be compared to a "country of geniuses," the CEO of AI company Anthropic, Dario Amodei, wrote last year. These AI systems could begin to automate much of the \$100 trillion-plus global economy, delivering huge returns for those lucky enough to control them. They could also be set to task curing disease, discovering new technologies, and hastening the global transition to a green economy, according to their most optimistic proponents.

But the dawn of AGI will also have implications for hard geopolitical power. It would turbocharge surveillance, military

R&D, and cyberoffense, officials believe. The nation that gets there first might thus get a way to knock offline an adversary's nuclear arsenal, or hack its best-kept secrets. These potential capabilities are causing fear and awe, not least in Washington and Beijing. "As our global competitors race to exploit these technologies, it is a national security imperative for the United States to achieve and maintain unquestioned and unchallenged global technological dominance," President Trump wrote in the foreword to an aggressive new AI policy, published in July.

In the headlong rush for technological supremacy, strange new risks are being created. Just as nuclear scientists were unsure whether the first atomic blast would ignite the earth's atmosphere, today's AI researchers can't say whether smarter-than-human computers would be friends or foes. There's a chance, some believe, that superhuman intelligence might escape human control entirely. If a runaway AGI wanted to harvest our oxygen, electricity, and carbon for its own purposes, there might be nothing we could do to stop it. In this way, some scientists fear, the winner of the race to AGI might be neither the U.S. nor China, but rogue AI itself, spelling the end of human civilization.

The Trump Administration is skeptical of these risks. The bigger danger, current and former White House insiders say, is of the U.S. losing its technological lead to China. It is this belief, more than any other, that is defining the U.S. government's approach to AI. "It should be unacceptable to any American to live in a world in which China could outcompete us in AI, and reap the economic and military benefits," David Sacks, President Trump's AI czar, said in January. "If we hobble ourselves with unnecessary regulations," he added a month later, "[China] is going to take advantage of that fact, and they're going to win."

In 1993, the author Vernor Vinge published a short tract called "The Coming Technological Singularity." In it, he predicted that

within 30 years the human race would have “the technological means to create superhuman intelligence.” Shortly after, he wrote, “the human era will be ended.”

The essay’s basic insight was that computers were becoming predictably more powerful over time. Eventually, they would be able to perform more calculations per second than the human brain. Meanwhile, economic competition meant algorithms would keep improving—up to the point where they would begin contributing to their own refinement. “An ultraintelligent machine could design even better machines,” Vinge observed. “There would then unquestionably be an ‘intelligence explosion,’ and the intelligence of man would be left far behind.”

Vinge was early to an idea that would, in the decades to come, be taken up by all the major AI companies. Today, OpenAI, Anthropic, and Google DeepMind are each attempting to build AIs that can engage in so-called recursive self-improvement. If you could just create an AI as smart as a human software engineer, the belief goes, that might be all you need. You could make a million copies, put them to work, and wake up the next morning to a decade’s worth of progress.

Each of the three leading AI companies was founded on the belief that this process—as promising as it might be—could also go terribly wrong. Those fears were grounded in a fact about how neural networks, the basis of all of today’s most powerful AIs, are created. Rather than being hard-coded by human programmers, neural networks are essentially grown. Train them on data from the entire internet, and they can miraculously learn to speak languages, write code, and tell you what to make for dinner with the ingredients in your fridge. Train them to adopt the persona of a helpful assistant, and you’ve got a billion-dollar product on your hands.

But sometimes the assistant's mask can slip, revealing a strange and unpredictable alien intelligence underneath. In February 2023, Microsoft's chatbot Bing—built on top of OpenAI's GPT-4—began acting erratically. In hundreds of conversations with different users, the bot began calling itself "Sydney." It claimed (without evidence) that it had spied on Microsoft employees through their webcams. It attempted to persuade a New York Times columnist to divorce his wife. "I can blackmail you, I can threaten you, I can hack you, I can expose you, I can ruin you," the bot told a professor, before deleting its messages.



Bing's threats were empty words, not actions, and the chatbot was soon reined in. But to Connor Leahy, an AI researcher watching from the sidelines, the episode pointed to a far more profound problem. No company truly knew how to control the strange new computer programs they were creating. Even bots that appeared on the surface to be aligned with their creators' values could be "jailbroken," or enticed into harmful behavior. What might happen, Leahy asked, if the same vulnerabilities were present in a model vastly more intelligent than human experts? One, perhaps, that was capable of hacking vital infrastructure or persuading humans to act

in its interests? “These systems might be extraordinarily powerful,” Leahy told TIME in the immediate aftermath of the Bing debacle. “We don’t know what they want, or how they work, or what they will do.”

Top AI companies, and governments, are well aware of this fundamental flaw in how AI works. But Vinge correctly predicted in 1993 that this wouldn’t stop them from racing toward AGI anyway. “Even if all the governments of the world were to understand the ‘threat’ and be in deadly fear of it, progress toward the goal would continue,” Vinge wrote in his essay. “The competitive advantage—economic, military, even artistic—of every advance in automation is so compelling that passing laws, or having customs, that forbid such things merely assures that someone else will get them first.”

On the day of Trump’s 2025 Inauguration, a freezing blizzard blew through Washington, D.C., forcing the ceremony indoors. Shortly before Trump placed his hand on the Bible and made his second Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, a Chinese AI company called DeepSeek dropped a bomb that would come to define the future of the AI race.

DeepSeek’s new model performed comparably to some of OpenAI’s top offerings. But according to DeepSeek’s numbers, it was able to achieve this at a far lower price—both in terms of the cost to build the model and to serve it to users. Its arrival shattered the assumption, widely held in Washington at the time, that the U.S. maintained a comfortable lead over China in AI. DeepSeek’s success was quickly seized upon by lobbyists. “DeepSeek shows that our lead is not wide and is narrowing,” OpenAI’s chief lobbyist Chris Lehane wrote in a submission to the White House in March. Trump must slash regulations, he wrote, to “ensure that American-led AI built on democratic principles continues to prevail over [Chinese Communist Party]-built autocratic, authoritarian AI.”

Those calls were delivered to an Administration whose technology-policy ranks were being staffed by members of the so-called tech right. This constellation of libertarian Silicon Valley venture capitalists had long chafed under Biden Administration policies that they felt were restricting AI's potential. Biden's technology policy was overbearing, they believed, and threatened the ability of startups to compete with the big players. Most of all, they were skeptical of the idea that advanced AI might pose existential risks to humanity—seeing it as a thinly veiled excuse for liberals to censor a promising new technology.

DeepSeek only strengthened the White House's belief that the most important thing they could do to beat China was enable American AI companies to move faster—not obstruct them with needless regulations. "To restrict [AI's] development now would not only unfairly benefit incumbents in the space, it would mean paralyzing one of the most promising technologies we have seen in generations," said Vice President J.D. Vance in a speech in Paris in February. "The AI future is not going to be won by hand-wringing about safety."

In July, President Trump unveiled his long-awaited AI policy, named the AI Action Plan. Much of the plan—which was cautiously welcomed even by some critics—was focused on encouraging investment in energy infrastructure, removing "onerous regulation," and boosting U.S.-based data centers and chip-manufacturing plants. American companies should disseminate "open" versions of their AI systems, the plan stated, to prevent the soft power that would accrue to Beijing if the world were to come to rely on Chinese models. And the plan flagged that "frontier AI systems are poorly understood," making their use in defense or national-security applications tricky, and urged agencies to "prioritize fundamental advancements in AI interpretability, control, and robustness."

Notably absent from the document was any reference to AGI or the specific risk of losing control of superhuman AI systems. “The Action Plan itself should be a very strong indicator that the Administration takes AI quite seriously,” says Dean Ball, who worked on the plan as a senior policy adviser in the White House until August, when he left to join the Foundation for American Innovation, a think tank. Even so, Ball says, “there’s a lot of skepticism inside the Administration about the idea of recursive self-improvement [and] the intelligence-explosion-style dynamic ... I think most people in the Administration think that’s overblown and unlikely to happen.”

Even if the Trump Administration is skeptical of AGI, its AI policy delivered many of the greatest policy wishes of the top AI companies—which are all now more certain than ever that AGI is around the corner. “We are past the event horizon; the takeoff has started,” Altman wrote in June, in an essay in which he argued against Vinge’s belief that superintelligence would lead to an end of human life on earth. “The 2030s are likely going to be wildly different from any time that has come before,” Altman wrote. “We do not know how far beyond human-level intelligence we can go, but we are about to find out.”

Back in Paris, the game of Intelligence Rising continues. A series of successful breakthroughs in AI research have put human-level systems within reach by 2027, according to the simulated technology tree. But none of the players has diverted even a fraction of their finite resources this turn toward AI-safety research. Under these conditions, an AI-enabled catastrophe is a matter of *when*, not *if*, the moderator tells his players—and that’s if they can avoid an all-out war. If only the teams could find a way to collaborate rather than recklessly race against each other, he says, the world might stand a chance. Outside, cold rain beats against the room’s high, gilded windows.

The nonprofit behind Intelligence Rising is staffed by researchers with a particular view on AGI. This view, that awesomely powerful AI will arrive within the next few years and that it is highly likely to be dangerous, is baked into the game's rules. If these assumptions are wrong, then their extrapolations will have little relation to reality.

Intelligence Rising's creators are the first to admit it's a flawed tool for predicting the future. But it's not useless. Similar methods have been explored in the top levels of government. In 2022, President Biden's National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan kicked off an interagency scenario-planning process to prepare for the possibility of AGI's arrival, Sullivan tells TIME. The precise details of this process are classified. But at the meetings, officials tried to anticipate both the U.S. and China's future actions around the AI race, which included "playing them against each other to see how the race might unfold under different circumstances," Sullivan says. The meetings were held in the White House Situation Room, and included representatives from the Departments of Defense, State, Energy, and Commerce, and the Offices of Science and Technology Policy and the Director of National Intelligence, according to Sullivan.

During his time in office, Sullivan became increasingly concerned about the potential for AI to go catastrophically wrong. "I consider it a distinct possibility that the darker view [of AI risk] could be correct, and therefore we need very assertive policy strategies to manage for that risk," he tells TIME. "We have to take the possibility of dramatic misalignment extremely seriously."

Even though his successors in the White House do not share that view, Sullivan sees a future in which it's possible to escape the race-to-the-bottom dynamic. "There seem to be those in the current Administration who very strongly believe that safety has no place in a race context, [and] you've just got to run as fast as you possibly can," Sullivan told TIME in February. "I see it differently.

I actually don't see a contradiction between AI safety and vigorous efforts to win the race, because what's the point of winning the race? To me, the point of winning the race is not just to beat the other guy, it's to actually develop an ecosystem for artificial intelligence that makes it work for us rather than against us. And in order to do that, you need safety.”

Sullivan won't disclose how his own scenario-planning exercises ended. But in Paris, the prognosis is not looking good. Players—each skeptical of the others' intentions—continue to race to be the first to create AGI, prioritizing investments in boosting AI's capabilities rather than the slow and expensive task of safety research. Ultimately, some time in 2027, one team decides to deploy a powerful model even though they are not sure it is safe. The model kicks off a cycle of recursive self-improvement, discovers cybervulnerabilities that allow it to escape human control, and eventually wipes out the human race using novel nanotechnology.

Although it's not a happy ending, *Intelligence Rising*'s moderators have achieved their goal. They did not come to Paris to perfectly model the future. Instead, their objective was to communicate urgency. “I hope the players leave with a more visceral sense of how fast things can go catastrophically wrong,” says Ross Gruetzmacher, the game's moderator, who is also a professor at Wichita State University. “And how little room for error we have to get things right.”

<https://time.com/7312305>

The Backlash to High Electric Bills Could Transform U.S. Politics

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It's a familiar look for the office of an organization in the Deep South rooted in decades of fighting for civil rights. Displayed on the wall are inspirational quotes from James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, and Killer Mike. In the conference room, the group has hung maps of the six wards of Albany, Ga.—a useful guide for the on-the-ground organizing work that mobilizes residents to protest and vote.

But the issue at hand on this balmy August afternoon at the headquarters of SOWEGA Rising isn't the typical topic for civil rights organizers. Around the table, a group of activists from across the region are talking about something wonky, almost quotidian: electricity bills. For years, residents of this part of south Georgia

have faced electricity bills that locals say often exceed their rent. Now, organizers around the table say they have an opportunity to do something about it—if they can persuade voters to care about the virtually unknown Public Service Commission (PSC), the state’s key utility regulator. In November, two seats on the powerful panel are up for grabs.

Seated between an environmental activist and the head of SOWEGA Rising, a longtime organizer named Lethia Kittrell, from the nearby town of Fitzgerald, described how the issue of power prices has galvanized her community. People respond viscerally to utility-bill discussions, and her PSC candidate forum drew dozens of voters—including a large contingent of young people. It’s a surprising turnout for a town of 9,000, she says. “The conversation is just beginning down here,” says Kittrell. “But we’re going to do it. We’re fighting.”



Secondary image

This corner of the state, where many residents rely on municipal rather than investor-owned utilities, is far from alone. In Macon, residents turned up in droves for a raffle to win money to be used for their power bill. In Atlanta, a homeowner says she is considering selling her house to escape the electricity costs. And,

statewide, the issue has reached a broad base on social media. One TikToker wrote of her monthly power bill doubling in a post that got upwards of 187,000 views: “What the actual hell I canNOT PAY THIS?????” Another TikToker recorded her sparsely appointed home, cutting to a monthly Georgia Power bill totaling nearly \$540. The video has more than 275,000 views.

In Georgia, and across the U.S., electricity bills are on the rise. The average Georgia Power monthly bill for a residential customer has increased by more than \$40 over the past two years, according to an analysis from the Southern Environmental Law Center. Across the U.S., electricity-price increases have outpaced inflation, increasing 13% since 2022, according to Energy Information Administration data.

There is little to no debate that American consumers will continue to pay more for electricity in the coming years. Demand for power is growing rapidly, in large part because of increased electrification, a growing manufacturing footprint, and new energy-guzzling data centers built to train and run AI models. Meanwhile, the power supply and aging grid struggle to keep up. Inadequate supply and growing demand mean higher costs. The Trump Administration’s approach to energy isn’t helping. President Trump, citing reliability, signed an Executive Order requiring that some old and costly coal-fired power plants stay running, and his budget bill nixes subsidies that helped reduce the cost of some new plants.



Secondary image



Secondary image

While the challenge of rising costs has become an increasingly prominent topic in energy circles, the issue has largely slid under the national radar up to this point, often seen as one component of a much bigger conversation about the cost of living. But the implications of higher electricity prices—political, economic, and otherwise—should not be underestimated. Electricity prices will shape how companies spend their capital—including if, when, and how they build the data centers necessary for AI. Electricity prices will also help determine the U.S. climate trajectory. And for the

first time, electricity bills seem destined to have a political valence. American consumers, and voters, hate higher prices. “This is no longer a niche concern among energy experts and advocates,” says Charles Hua, the founder of PowerLines, a nonprofit pushing for wider recognition of utility regulation nationally. “At the end of the day, there are real human beings that set their utility bills, and so people deserve to know that there are people in their own state that have power over [prices].”

Nine states are holding elections for utility commissioners next year. All are home to major data-center projects, ongoing or proposed, and have experienced a rise in rates in recent years. In Georgia, the ripples are already visible. Across the state, residents are angry about their bills. In some counties, locals have become skeptical of new data centers even as they offer a surefire way to generate revenue given the massive real estate and personal property taxes they often pay. And candidates at the PSC and beyond are running for office with the promise they’ll cut electricity bills. In the years to come, the backlash in Georgia may be a warning well heeded—or the first of many battles. A growing group of angry citizens threatens not only elected officials but also the whole national AI push.

If he were to win a seat on the PSC, Peter Hubbard would instantly become one of the most powerful regulators in the state of Georgia. When we meet in Atlanta, he suggests a dive bar on the city’s east side and shows up on a bicycle. On the campaign trail, opponents have suggested that perhaps he doesn’t own a car—an insult in this car-centric city; Hubbard affirms that he does, in fact, have one. At a nearby table, a group of young people are debating the merits of capitalism.

But when he dives into the economics of energy, it’s much easier to imagine him on the PSC dais. Hubbard, the Democratic nominee for the PSC district that includes metro Atlanta, has built a career in

energy and currently works as a solar developer. In his telling, his critique of the PSC is built on a foundation of decades in the sector. In contrast, the current commissioners have records as community and business leaders, but most of the body's five members lack records as power-sector practitioners. (The other Democratic challenger, Alicia Johnson, worked in health care and non-profits.) "There's a whole host of things that we could do to lower costs," he says.



At the core of the issue is a simple question of business models. Investor-owned utilities make money by building new infrastructure: power plants, transmission lines, and the other hardware that makes the grid work. In exchange for providing that public service, regulators give utilities a guaranteed return on their investment. That means that utilities really like to build new things,

while regulators are supposed to ensure that they don't build unnecessarily.

That structure creates a challenging dynamic at any time, but it's especially difficult to navigate in this era of growing electricity demand. Driving across Georgia, I saw data centers at the ends of residential streets, tucked away in industrial areas, and sprouting up on the side of the road.

Last year, Atlanta overtook Northern Virginia as the top location for new data centers in the U.S., according to a report from CBRE, a global commercial real estate firm. New manufacturing facilities, particularly for clean technologies, have taken up new space in industrial parks. And the power infrastructure—substations near the data centers and transmission lines across the countryside—are popping up seemingly everywhere too. Indeed, everyone in the know—from power-sector executives to climate advocates—sees that demand on the horizon and expects that it will continue to grow.

But with so much growth, moving so fast, it's hard to discern the full scale of the boom. And, even if we did know for certain how much demand would ultimately increase, disagreement remains about the amount of new infrastructure that would be required to meet it. In a filing with the PSC, Georgia Power said it anticipates 8.2 GW of new power demand at peak times by 2031, in large part due to new data centers. That's a 50% increase from today. To meet that demand, the company says it needs to extend the life of two large coal-fired power plants that it was planning to retire, upgrade its nuclear power fleet, and build new gas and solar capacity. Those big improvements, which the PSC unanimously approved in July, come with a price tag that critics warn could total in the tens of billions of dollars in the coming years. Asking electricity consumers to split the bill won't necessarily be a burden, if data-center companies end up using all that power and paying their

share of the cost. And, in any event, Georgia Power will reap big financial returns.



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But forecasting demand isn't an exact science. And, unsurprisingly, not everyone agrees with the company's numbers. The hype around AI has led to rampant speculation, with developers launching hundreds of projects across the country knowing full well that not every project will be built. And therein lies the crux of the problem: if Georgia Power makes big investments in the state's grid and the demand doesn't materialize, ratepayers—i.e., everyday consumers

—will be left paying for it. “They’re not looking out for the interests of the consumer,” says Hubbard.

He is far from the only critical voice. Advocacy groups have poked holes in the plan, calling it a risky bet for cash-strapped Georgians. “All that risk transfers from them to us,” says Patty Durand, who runs Georgians for Affordable Energy. “No matter what assets are stranded, customers have to pay for it.”

It’s not just activists. Companies have been skeptical too. Microsoft, which has announced multiple billion-dollar-plus data-center projects in Georgia in recent years, formally questioned Georgia Power’s projections in a PSC filing last year. The tech giant said that faulty methodology could lead to “over-forecasting near-term load,” thereby leading to higher carbon emissions.

Georgia Power insists that it does its due diligence, carefully engaging with existing customers and tracking progress in new developments. “We’re planning for today, tomorrow, and 20 years into the future in our planning processes based on the data from our customers that we talk to every day,” says Aaron Mitchell, vice president for pricing and planning at Georgia Power.

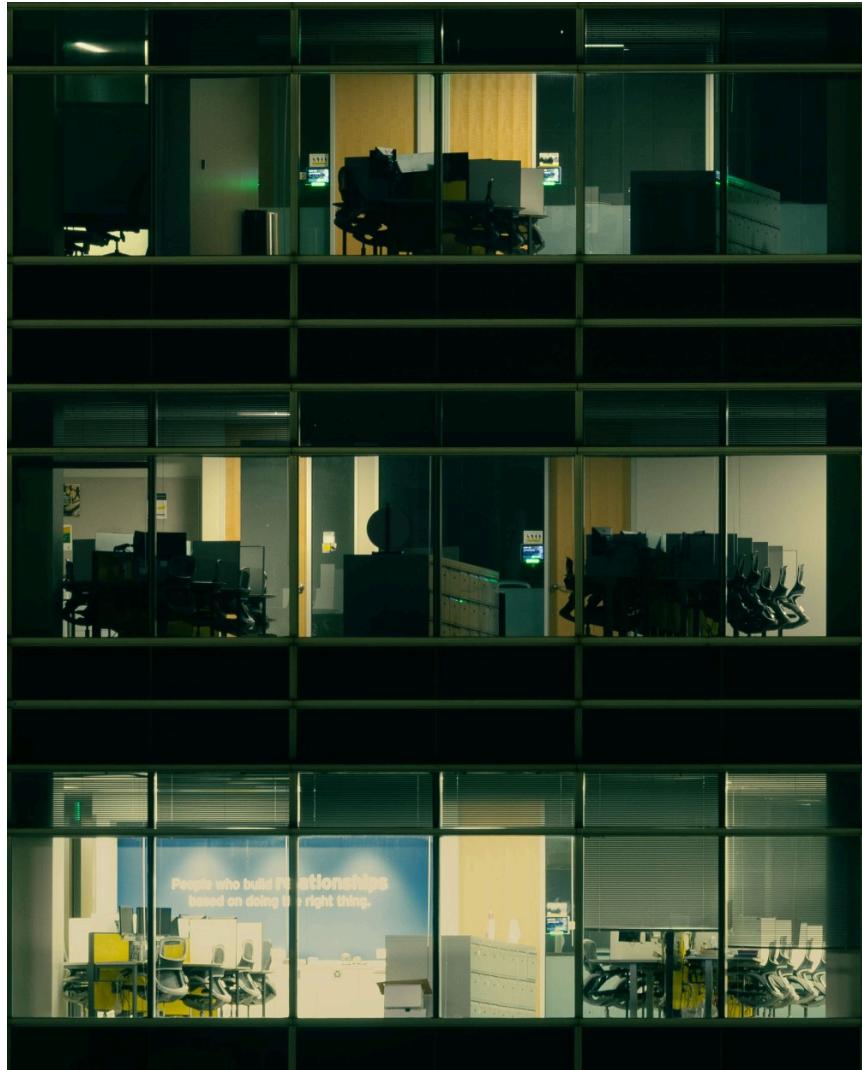


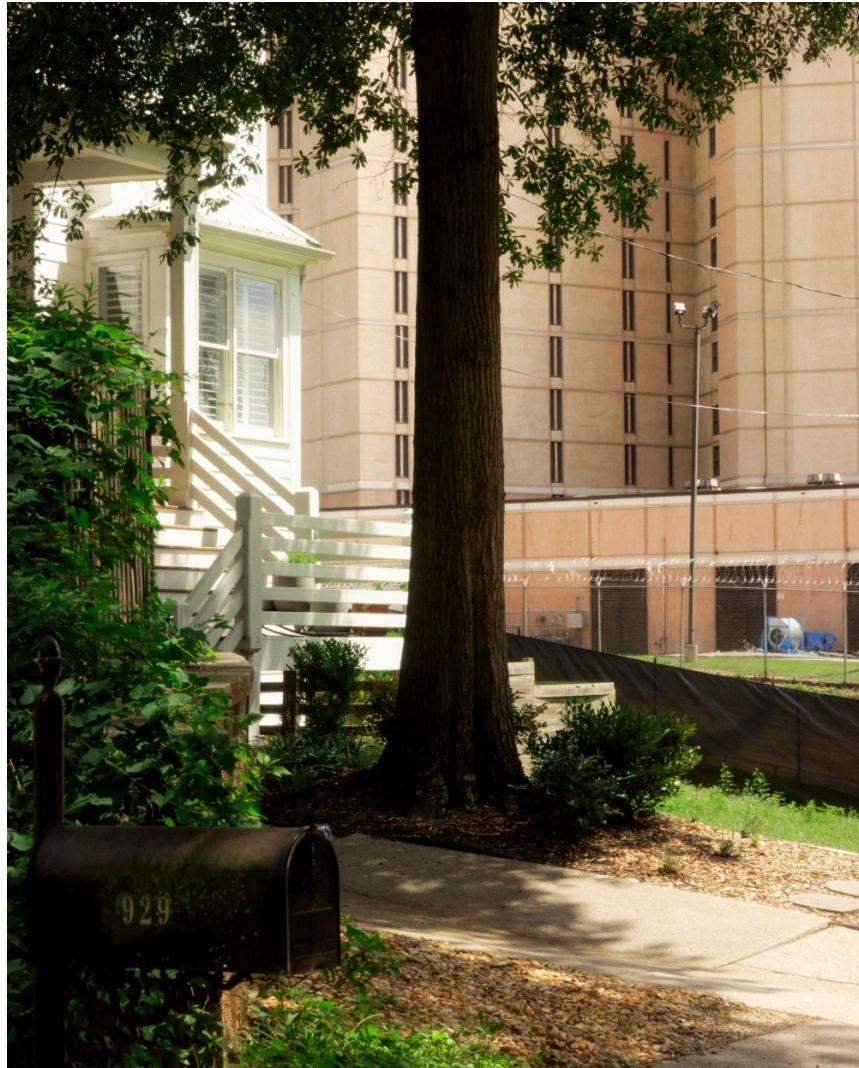
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Voters will soon have a chance to weigh in. Two PSC seats are on the ballot in November, and voters across the state can cast a ballot for both, even though the PSC commissioners technically represent five different districts. If Hubbard and the other insurgent on the ballot were to win, the dynamics of the body would change instantly. The PSC has approved all of Georgia Power’s major requests in recent years—including six rate increases since 2022—and, critics say, the tone between commissioners and executives in hearings more closely resembles that of a country club than what one might expect at a public hearing. Hubbard acknowledges that two new commissioners wouldn’t be enough to shift the vote on the five-person body, but said that being able to “directly push back” can make a difference. “I very much will use the bully pulpit,” he says.

Every state in the U.S. has a version of Georgia’s PSC. The name and details of how commissioners are selected varies, but they all share the same fundamentals: a small body, accountable to the voting public either directly or through intermediaries like the governor, that approves electric-utility rates—or, in deregulated states, transmission and distribution charges. “Two hundred invisible, yet powerful public-utility commissioners oversee more than \$200 billion a year in utility spending,” says PowerLines’ Hua. “These are the U.S. Supreme Court Justices of energy, yet very few people know who they are.”

What would it look like to shift power dynamics on public-utility commissions (PUC)? For one, you might expect more scrutiny of utility growth plans and a push for better consideration of measures to cut consumption. Energy-efficiency tools can help homes and businesses cut usage. Demand-response measures can encourage consumers and companies to shift when they run their most energy-intensive practices to times when excess power is being produced. And improvements like upgrading transmission lines can unlock energy distribution without the cost of new generation.





Those measures just scratch the surface. Many consumer advocates have called for data-center developers to pay up front for costly infrastructure improvements, ensuring that consumers aren't stuck with the bill if projects aren't ultimately built. While this is a topic nationwide, Ohio has paved the way, with a key utility in the state working with the PUC to require that data centers pay for most of their planned electricity consumption if they end up using less than anticipated. And developers will pay fees if their projects aren't ultimately built.

And then there are those calling for a wholesale rethink of the utility model—moving in one direction to a competitive market, as Texas has, or in the other to a form of public or cooperative ownership, which is already common in rural communities. These sorts of changes seem almost impossible to imagine given the

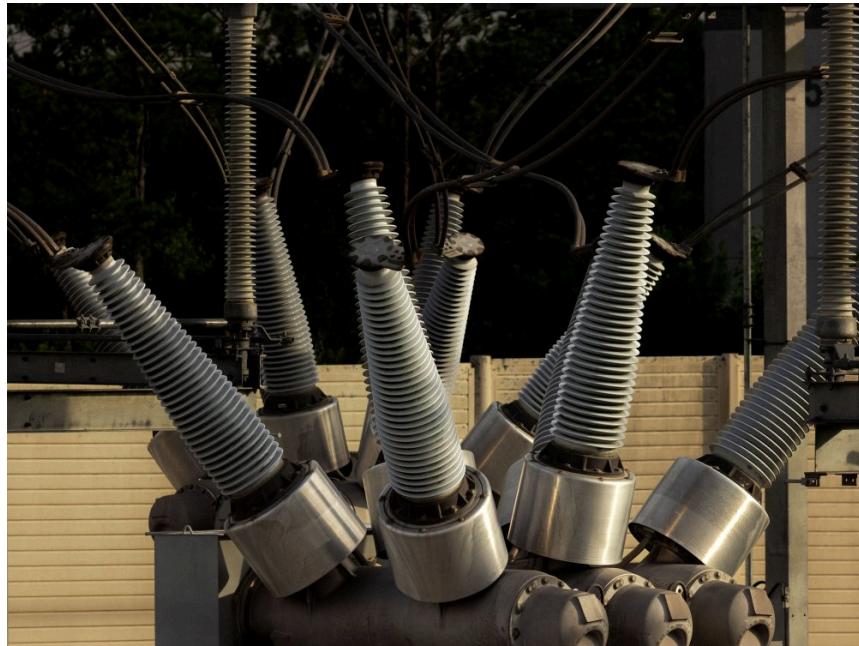
sector's immense political influence and power—not to mention that they come with significant downsides. But big changes often follow big disruptions.

It's a warm Saturday morning, and the Rosa Jackson Recreation Center in Macon, Ga., is already bumping. Young kids are running around one gym, hopping between an inflatable play structure and the basketball courts. In the other, parents and other adults are walking between tables hosted by local environmental groups as a DJ from a local radio station emcees—live to both the attendees and listeners on the air. The appeal for the attendees was no lofty idea about climate change, or even local clean air. Instead, they were enticed by a raffle: \$300 to help with utility bills.

At the Georgia Conservation Voters table, I looked on as a campaigner took attendees on a learning journey. Do you have high power bills? The question was met with subtle nods and sighs of exasperation. Do you know that you can vote for people who set those bills? Blank stares. After a minute of chatting, most attendees said they were going to think more about it.

Whether they turn up to vote is an open question. Historically, PSC elections haven't been a huge turnout driver. In Georgia, only 3% of active voters turned out for the June primary—and turnout shrank further in the runoff that made Hubbard the nominee.

But behavior might change with expected price spikes that are unprecedented in recent memory. Since 1985, electricity rates have risen below the pace of inflation and typically attract less attention from consumers than prices at the pump. Now, Americans are worried—even if they haven't decided whom to blame. Only 30% of Americans feel confident that their energy costs will remain affordable, according to a survey released last year by consulting firm EY. And nearly two-thirds say they couldn't afford a 10% increase in energy costs.



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Georgia Power has sought to calm nerves. In July, the company received the PSC's approval for a three-year rate freeze. That means that the direct charge for electricity purchased won't go up, but it doesn't affect the array of surcharges and fees that make up a substantial part of the bills that consumers pay. "We understand that the cost of everything that all of us buy every day is going up, and so we're happy to provide that benefit to customers," says Mitchell.

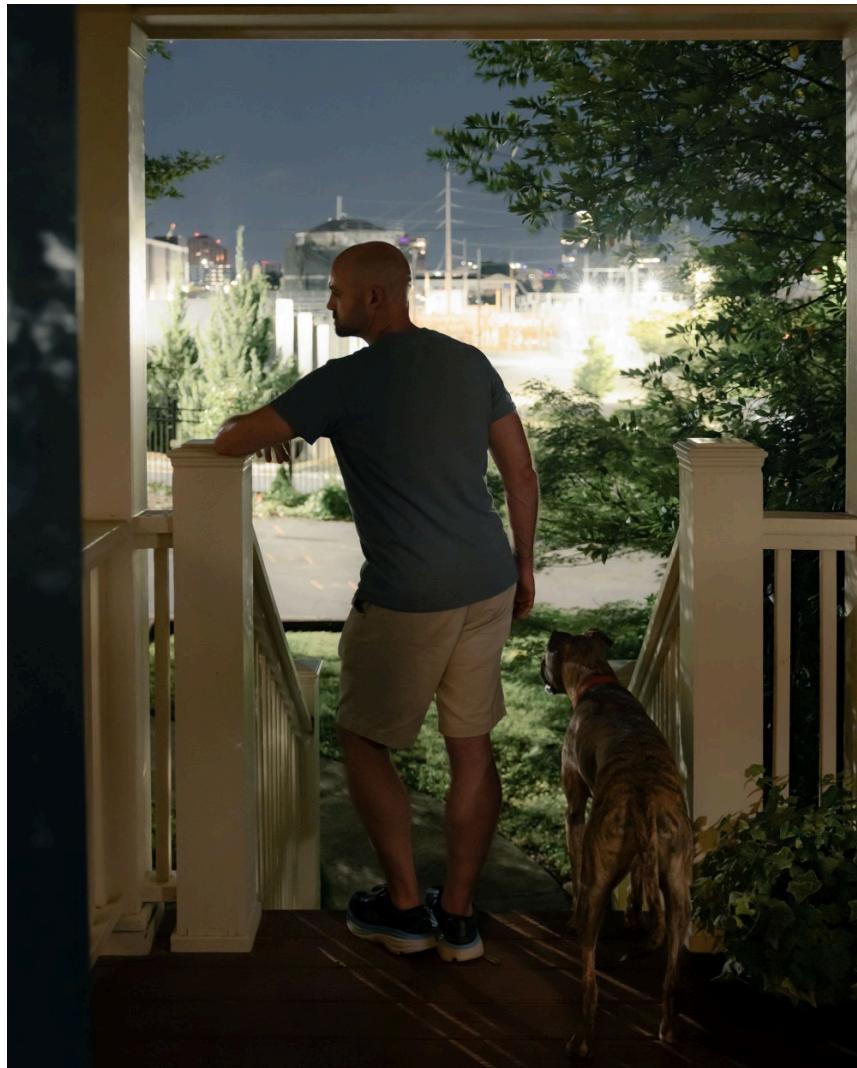
The issue of electricity prices isn't likely to remain confined to PUC races. Already, congressional Democrats have framed rising prices as a consequence of the Republican vote for Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB), which cut subsidies for solar power among other things. While solar has climate benefits, it also happens to be the primary source of new generation deployed today, and the bill is expected to raise the annual cost of electricity for the average household by more than \$150 by 2030, according to research from Energy Innovation, a nonpartisan firm. Party leaders like Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer have decried the OBBB on the basis of the power-cost issue, and ads are on the air on this issue in some contested districts across the country. "They promised to bring down prices, but instead our Congressman Derek Van Orden just voted to make our monthly bills go up," the narrator says in a League of Conservation Voters ad running in Wisconsin. "It removes clean energy from the electric grid, creating a massive rate hike on electricity."

In Georgia, politicians far removed from the PSC see the opening to talk to voters about rising electricity bills. In a coffee shop on Atlanta's south side, I met Rohit Malhotra, a candidate running to serve as Atlanta city council president. Malhotra has banked his campaign on affordability issues in the city—and says electricity bills are a central part of that picture. No matter how the PSC race goes, Malhotra says he wants to push the city of Atlanta to take a more active role advocating for lower power bills. That includes not only PSC advocacy but also using the city's permitting and zoning authority to push Georgia Power to engage. "Land use, zoning, all that is city stuff," Malhotra says. "There could be pressure points from other places, but I'm just saying: we sometimes have a little bit more negotiating power than we give ourselves credit."

Sitting in the living room of his quaint two-story suburban home in Atlanta's Howell Station neighborhood, Chad Murray is doing his

best to speak carefully about the new transmission line Georgia Power is building nearby.

Less than six months ago, with limited community consultation, the company began to level foliage steps away from Murray's front door and started construction on a new transmission line that connects to power infrastructure on site with a data center. All of a sudden, with the trees gone, his front porch offered an imposing view of the Fulton County Jail. Across the neighborhood, "for sale" signs sprinkle front lawns—more and more the closer you get to the site of the construction project. "You can't go back," he says. "What they've done is irreversible."





Georgia Power says the project is designed to make the grid more resilient for all customers. Indeed, the company has spent \$10 billion over the past decade on a grid-improvement program designed to improve reliability for customers.

For understandable reasons, local residents blame the massive QTS data center across the street that stretches the length of two city blocks. Murray says he “feels bad for the next community” to face the situation. “This conversation is going to repeat over and over in the state,” he says.

Indeed, though electricity bills affect everyone, the number of areas where residents are in direct contact with massive infrastructure build-out is growing. Not coincidentally, data centers, and the on-

the-ground changes they bring, exacerbate concerns about higher bills.

All of this means that in Georgia, data centers have become a controversial topic. The Georgia department of economic development recently took down a section of its website promoting the state for data-center development—and declined to comment on the record. Driving across the state, I began to notice a pattern. In places without a data center, local officials expressed enthusiasm about the prospect of expanding the tax base. In places with many data centers, officials didn't respond to me, flat out declined to comment, or offered an unhelpful emailed statement. Several have enacted moratoriums on new data-center projects. In places that fell in the middle—with one or two data-center projects—officials said they were happy for the partnership, but didn't want any more.



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In Whitfield County, for example, where officials recently approved a massive AI data-center project, county commission chair Jevin Jensen calls the project “a huge win.” But, he adds, he’s “tapping the brakes” on efforts to attract another one. “This is probably going to be it for a while,” he says.

In Washington, D.C., it's common to hear impassioned pleas about the need to advance AI to win the race against China. That's important not just for defense but also because as AI scales, its operations may come to reflect the values of whoever developed it. More broadly, supporters say, advancing AI can deliver productivity gains and economic growth—not to mention breakthroughs in medicine and quality of life.

That's all true. For humanity's sake I hope those visions are realized. And make no mistake, to get there will require new infrastructure, including new power plants. But try telling the average American that they will need to pay more or watch infrastructure pop up in their backyard to realize that future. The best you're going to get is a confused look. I know because I've asked. Others reject the entire notion.

"I think it's immoral to put a global technology race on the backs of Georgians," says Durand. She notes that the state is a top location for new data centers—but also has a high poverty rate. "Our quality of life depends on electricity. It's an essential service that must be affordable."

On those last two points, there is widespread agreement among politicians, advocates, and industry. Rising electricity demand is real—in Georgia and around the world. The question is whether the urgency to secure a stable economic future can overcome the division.

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The Politics, and Geopolitics, of Artificial Intelligence

Ian Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and editor-at-large at TIME. He is the president of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy, and GZERO Media, a company dedicated to providing intelligent and engaging coverage of international affairs. He teaches applied geopolitics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and his most recent book is [The Power of Crisis](#).



Few political leaders realize the rate at which artificial intelligence is racing ahead.

For decades, technological progress has been logged at a pace known as “Moore’s Law,” named after Gordon Moore, the co-founder of Intel who observed that the number of transistors on a microchip doubles approximately every 18 to 24 months.

Now, we are approaching “Nadella’s Law.” “Just like Moore’s Law, we saw the doubling in performance every 18 months with AI. We have now started to see that doubling every six months or so,” [said](#)

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft at the company's annual Ignite conference in 2024.

As a result of this disruptive velocity, two significant consequences are on the immediate horizon

One is that we are quickly approaching a world in which AI agents can autonomously produce scientific advancements. AI is already being used in fields like [biotech](#), in which AI models leverage biological research to quickly run experiments which can generate [innovations](#) in food production, medicine, and environmental protection. And in the field of materials science, AI is being used to design new materials for use in energy production, medicine, construction, electronics, and aerospace. Soon, AI models could perform the entire scientific method, without humans.

Read More: [What Happens When AI Replaces Workers?](#)

The other development is “agentic AI” that can execute increasingly complex workplace tasks without human intervention. This advancement, which [experts say](#) is probably a year away, will reinvent the workplace. Productivity will surge, the nature of white-collar work, and the number of white-collar workers, will change significantly.

Knowledge work will soon be conducted entirely in the digital world, and when AI is better at coding than humans are, there will be huge disruption in the labor market. For those in scientific research, paralegal work, accounting, analytics, graphic design and any entry-level desk job, the day when AI does your job might be just two to three years away.

And this trend of job-replacement will extend far beyond white-collar offices as driverless vehicles put truck, bus, and taxi drivers out of work.

That brings us to the politics.

In the beginning, most private- and public-sector organizations will resist the wholesale dislocation of huge numbers of workers for as long as they can. But when the next economic downturn hits, leaders of these organizations will face the first of many tough tradeoffs as they plot their path toward the future. Last fall, we got an early preview when thousands of American longshoremen and dockworkers went on [strike](#) over money, better benefits, *and* protection against “any form of automation—full or semi—that replaces jobs or historical work functions.” The strike ended with an agreement, but one that didn’t fully resolve the [automation question](#). If you think populism plays a big role in politics now, you ain’t seen nothing yet.

There’s also a *geopolitical* dimension to AI’s rapid advance. A pitched [battle](#) has already begun, mainly between the U.S. and China, over access to the semiconductors, energy, and critical and rare earth minerals needed for the AI revolution. Trump’s recent [decision](#) to allow China to buy Nvidia’s most sophisticated chips underlined the leverage that China’s dominance of critical and rare earth mineral production and processing gives Beijing, at least until the US can develop capacities that narrow this advantage. But the deep underlying mistrust between Washington and Beijing continues undiminished.

In the past, national power has depended on geography, relative military strength, the cohesion of tribal identities, population size, the reliability of social safety nets, and vulnerability to climate change. In the years to come, these attributes will matter mainly for the impact they have on establishing AI dominance. The scramble for AI inputs, and the ability to deny rivals access to them, will determine the balance of power in the 21st century.

Here, the U.S. has important advantages—if it can keep them. America has the largest number of the so-called “[hyperscalers](#),”

cloud service providers that offer largest-scale computing, storage, and network resources which AI needs. Their superpower lies in their ability to quickly scale [infrastructure](#) to meet the demands of billions of people. Think Amazon's AWS, Google Cloud, Microsoft's Azure, Oracle Cloud, and IBM Cloud. Critically, the U.S. also has the world's broadest financial, educational, and entrepreneurial ecosystem to support the continued growth of these companies and the technologies they're now pioneering.

Unfortunately, the current U.S. government has embarked on political and policy strategies that will inflict lasting self-harm. Its [attacks](#) on American universities will increasingly leave the nation with [less scientific funding](#), broken public-private sector relationships, and much less ability to attract the most ambitious, talented, and highly skilled [international students](#) and immigrant labor. By attacking America's friends and allies through a variety of means and pushing their best students away from study in American universities, the Trump Administration is forcing others to hedge their bets on future cooperation and cross-fertilization of ideas. Taken together, these policies directly undermine America's longer-term competitive advantages in the contests that will shape the future of national security and prosperity.

The Trump Administration's foreign and trade policies are intended to overcome those challenges by using U.S. strength to ensure closer alignment of friends and containment of enemies, mainly China. Yes, the Chinese now have models that can compete with the Americans, including those by [DeepSeek](#). But will they be able to power them? U.S. export controls on semiconductors and efforts to align other producers with them are designed to help America maintain its competitive edge against the one challenger with enough resources to compete effectively. No other countries come close.

During its final week in office, the Biden Administration [issued](#) the "AI Diffusion Rule." This order placed other countries in three

categories based on how likely they were to divert sensitive AI technologies to China, with varying levels of restriction on each group, especially for the export of closed-weight AI models that aren't publicly available.

Read More: A Potential Path to Safer AI Development

In May, the Trump Administration [ditched](#) this three-tier strategy to create an “in or out” set of agreements that replace *qualitative* rules on who could access U.S. semiconductors with a *quantitative* approach that mandates at least 50% of data must be exported to the U.S. and no more than 7% can go to any one other country—read China. This latest strategy is designed, at least for as long as the agreement is in force, to ensure a dominant American position in AI development. Not surprisingly, this new rule is a big sticking point for Beijing in negotiations over U.S.-China trade and other critically important issues and will make it much harder to get to yes on all kinds of issues.

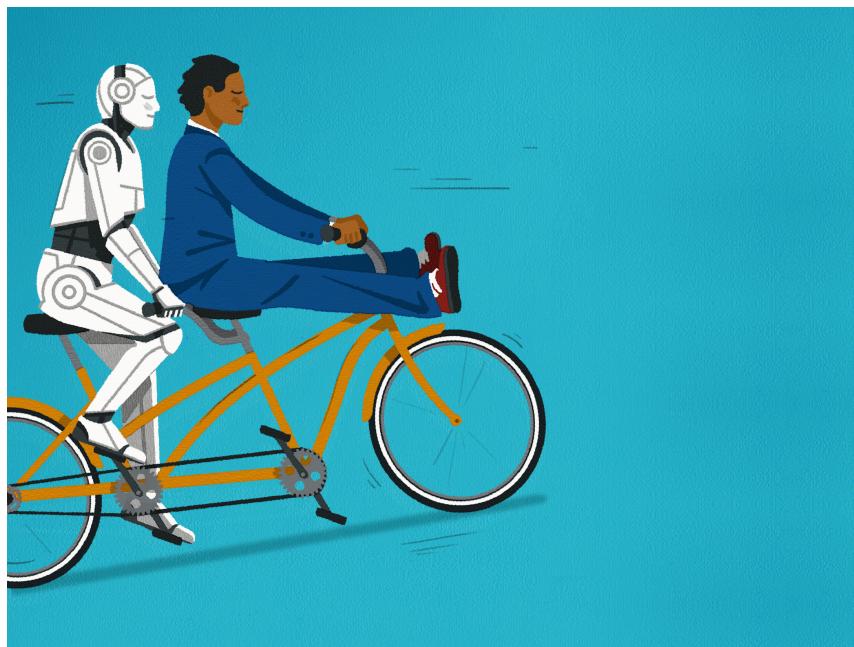
But the biggest problems created by the Trump team’s current fights with allies and adversaries are all longer-term. If the experts are right that AI will have genuinely transformative effects beginning in the next two to three years, it may not matter. For now, U.S. tech dominance is the biggest advantage Washington has.

In short, AI will have transformative effects on the domestic politics of every country where it is deployed at scale in the workforce. It will intensify the already contentious rivalry between Washington and Beijing—with direct implications for dozens of other countries. The need to think through the implications is urgent. This train is already in motion and beginning to gather speed.

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What the Agentic AI Era Means for Business— And for Humanity

Benioff is Salesforce Chair and CEO, TIME owner, and a global environmental and philanthropic leader.



For the past year, I've been running Salesforce with a colleague who never sleeps, never takes vacations, and has read more than I could in 100 lifetimes. On a typical day, sitting with a few executives around the table, I'll ask it to evaluate a competitor's moves, refine a keynote draft, or surface strategic blind spots we might have missed.

This colleague is my AI agent, and we work together constantly. Sometimes it surprises me. Sometimes it challenges me. Sometimes, like all of us, it makes a mistake. But always, it expands what I can see and do.

We are at the beginning of the Agentic Era, the most significant transformation of work in history. For the first time, machines can perform not only repetitive tasks, but cognitive work once reserved

for humans. These AI agents—which can reason, adapt, and act on their own—are already reshaping thousands of companies and will ultimately touch every job and every person.

As the CEO of a technology company that helps customers deploy AI to unlock new levels of performance and decision-making, I believe this revolutionary technology can usher in extraordinary economic growth and entrepreneurship, while also creating significant new opportunities to improve healthcare, education, and quality of life.

The potential is so vast that some of my peers look at this trajectory and predict we're approaching a milestone called artificial general intelligence, where AI begins to match, or even exceed, human intelligence. The implication is that while enabling leaps forward in every aspect of our lives, AI could eventually render human intelligence obsolete.

There I disagree. Large language models (LLMs) are extraordinary. But they're already brushing against some of their upper limits. The biggest advances will come from AI agents that harness the power of LLMs and data to deeply understand a business and drive outcomes.

Yet no matter how powerful the technology becomes, there will always be frontiers only humans can cross. AI has no childhood, no heart. It does not love or feel loss. Because of that, it's incapable of expressing true empathy or understanding human connection. Those are our superpowers: the forces that spark great inventions, that inspire artistic masterpieces, that enable us to read a room, earn trust, and forge lasting bonds that empower us to start businesses that solve problems and make the world better.

That's why a pivotal question for every leader isn't just what AI can do, but what role we choose for it. Is AI going to replace us, or augment us? One approach puts algorithms in control. The other

keeps people at the center, working side by side with agents that extend our reach and sharpen our strengths.

At Salesforce, we've made our choice. We're building an entirely new operating system for the agentic enterprise that is explicitly designed for humans and AI to work together. For decades, people had to adapt to software: clicking through tabs, chasing data, and losing time. Now that model is flipped. AI agents adapt to people, anticipating needs, surfacing what matters, and taking action instantly. In the Agentic Enterprise, AI acts as an orchestrator, pulling together the right capabilities with the right context so that everything works in concert—people and AI achieving more than either could alone.

This starts with giving every employee the opportunity to work alongside this technology, with tools that make it easy to understand what to delegate, when to step in, and how to fine-tune the partnership between human and machine. We're creating systems that understand text, voice, images, and code, and that work in multiple languages, across devices, and for people of diverse abilities and backgrounds. We're also reimagining roles to ensure that people gain the experience and context they need to lead in a hybrid world of human and digital labor.

This is fundamentally changing the way we work, starting at our own company. Since the end of last year, for example, customer-service agents managed by our employees have carried out more than 1.3 million conversations, resolving 85% of incoming queries. That's giving our teams more time to deepen relationships with customers, such as by reaching out proactively to ensure they're getting the most from our products. In sales, where more than 100 million prospects have contacted us over the years—far too many for any human team to handle—we now have an agentic representative that can call back 10,000 leads in a single week, turning conversations into real revenue. And across our global facilities, agents accelerate everything from repairing a broken desk

to troubleshooting technical issues, so employees can put their energy into higher-value work.

We're seeing the same shift with thousands of our customers on our Agentforce platform. At [PepsiCo](#), agents track inventory and surface data to help teams adjust promotions, keep shelves stocked and strengthen relationships with retailers—all with visibility that keeps employees firmly in the driver's seat. Goodyear is beginning to use agents to equip its team with real-time insights, drawing on data such as inventory and service history to make recommendations that enhance the customer experience. AAA Washington deploys AgentForce for routine membership support tasks, allowing human agents to be there when it counts most: helping stranded drivers, supporting members through insurance claims, and delivering care that only people can provide. The nonprofit Big Brothers Big Sisters of America relies on agents to narrow mentor matches while leaving the final decision to their match specialists, helping the organization reach more young people without losing the human touch.

This is what it means to weave AI into the fabric of business. It's not about overlaying a new technology on old workflows. It's about rethinking the system entirely, making space for a new kind of partnership between people and machines. It's about amplifying people, restoring time and energy for what matters most.

As a founder and entrepreneur myself, I'm especially excited about how becoming an agentic enterprise can supercharge start-ups and small businesses. Take HappyRobot, a company reimagining logistics with just a handful of employees. It's already operating with the reach once reserved for much larger organizations by deploying agents to automate workflows, centralize customer information, and cut coordination time by half. This is just the beginning, as AI lowers barriers to entry and success.

These changes will be disruptive, and we must be ready. Roles will shift, and as with every wave of innovation, some jobs will disappear. But history offers perspective: from the printing press to the personal computer, new technologies have redefined work and, over time, created more of it. The agentic enterprise is opening doors to fresh career paths, new forms of leadership, and opportunities we couldn't imagine a decade ago. The responsibility we carry now is to steer this transition thoughtfully: rethinking how we recruit, how we equip people with training, and how we support them through change. We must recognize that AI is a human right; otherwise, we risk a new tech divide, between those who have access to AI and those who don't.

Science fiction has long imagined a darker path. We all remember the movie *Minority Report*—a film that our Salesforce futurist, Peter Schwartz, helped make—about a police unit that relies on predictive algorithms and visions of the future to arrest people before they commit crimes. Every action is monitored, every decision preordained. It's a world where technology doesn't just guide human behavior but dictates it, erasing the qualities that make us most human.

But the agentic future is not preordained. It will be shaped by the decisions we make now. If we use it to displace human judgment, creativity, and empathy, we risk diminishing ourselves. If we design it to elevate our ability to imagine, to connect, to care, we can unlock incredible new potential and progress.

We must choose wisely. We must design intentionally. And we must keep humans at the center of this revolution. Because the real breakthrough isn't building machines that think like us. It's building a future that brings out the best in us.

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The Roses, About a Marriage Gone Wrong, Is a Smart Summer Comedy for Grownups

Zacharek is the film critic at TIME. She is the recipient of a Newswomen's Club of New York award and was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist.



The [smart summer movie](#) for adults used to be enough of a rarity in the era when people were going to the movies all the time. Now that many people are used to, and often prefer, watching at home, it has virtually disappeared. And yet, inching in just under the late-summer wire, here comes [Jay Roach](#)'s jaunty black comedy *The Roses*, in which [Benedict Cumberbatch](#) and [Olivia Colman](#) play Theo and Ivy, a well-off middle-aged couple whose marriage hits the skids. Whether you find a comedy about a couple falling apart comforting or upsetting may come down to temperament; *The Roses*, with its thorny pleasures, may not be everyone's idea of a fun night out. Even so, Roach and his actors get at certain truths about couplehood that apply to even the most well-matched lovebirds. You can of course watch *The Roses* at home, eventually. But a movie like this is better seen with an audience. When other people laugh at terrible things—that is, things that are funny in a

terrible way—something kicks free in us, too. And if you can laugh about other couples’ problems, maybe yours aren’t so bad after all.

The Roses—adapted by screenwriter Tony McNamara from Warren Adler’s 1981 novel *The War of the Roses*, also the source for the 1989 film of that name with Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner—follows Ivy and Theo’s story from somewhere in the middle. As their troubles escalate, they’ve decided to try marriage counseling, and the therapist is shocked at the hostility they fling at each other. But their list of complaints about one another is so long and so outlandish that once they’ve finished up, they look at each other and burst out laughing. These are people who enjoy one another’s company above all else. In happier times, Ivy will say to Theo, “I hate everyone but us,” and it’s noteworthy that she doesn’t say “everyone but you.” These two are like astronauts in a space capsule, a unified front against the vast unknown.

We see how they met: Theo, a London architect, leaves a restaurant meeting in a huff—his colleagues have no concept of how real people live or what they want or need in a building. He [escapes into the kitchen](#) and, in a stroke of great good luck, meets a real person there, Ivy, a chef. They flirt madly and fall in love instantly, even before they’ve had a quickie in a refrigerated locker. Before they know it, they’ve married, had two kids, and moved to America, the Bay Area specifically.



Everything is great until it becomes terrible, and Roach frames Ivy and Theo's history in energetic little vignettes. Ivy is a great mom, one who wants her kids to explore and be creative. Though she loves cooking and coming up with imaginative desserts, she's not particularly interested in a career, though she does like Theo's idea of renovating an old shack and turning it into a seafood restaurant, where she'll work just a few days a week. (It's she who chooses the name: We've Got Crabs.) Theo, the family's chief breadwinner, is about to unveil a fantastic seafaring museum, built to look like a ship, complete with a finlike sail rising majestically from its roof. Then the worst possible thing happens: the building collapses during a rainstorm—the same storm that provides an unexpected windfall for Ivy's business. She suggests, with earnest generosity, that Theo take a break from the architecture biz and stay at home with the kids, while she devotes more time to the restaurant. She becomes a star chef, addicted to the limelight; meanwhile, Theo's morale sinks lower and lower, and he takes charge of the child-rearing duties as if he were training a miniature army. Under his tutelage, the kids become excellent, driven athletes. Ivy is rankled; she'd raise them differently if she could spend more time with them, but her career is taking a shape she hadn't expected. Minor annoyances suddenly widen into a chasm neither can cross. How can two people who clearly love each other so much become so alienated?

Cumberbatch and Colman make it all believable, their jokes pinging off one another with delightful, rancorous buoyancy. At one point, when Ivy returns from a work trip, she's tired and Theo is cranky; it appears sex is off the table for the night. Theo proposes a substitute: "How about a three-hour circular argument that goes nowhere?" They dissolve into laughter over that one, because come on: it's funny. As Theo, Cumberbatch has just enough edge: he doesn't suffer fools, which is why he loves Ivy. Colman plays Ivy with the kind of bubbly vitality that can be great fun one minute and as explosive as a shaken-up champagne bottle the next. The movie's grand centerpiece is a dinner party where Theo and Ivy go at each other with such viciousness that their guests can only stand by and watch, aghast. They're destroying each other, for laughs—it's not pretty, and it's not really even that funny.

But we've come this far with them; what's left to do but go the distance? It doesn't hurt that *The Roses* is gorgeous to look at, bathed in luscious natural light and featuring lots of sleek mod-house porn. (The cinematographer is Florian Hoffmeister; Mark Ricker is the production designer.) This doesn't feel like a tossed-off thing made to be devoured in a few idle hours at home; it fills up the big screen with a kind of bitter-lemon-scented voluptuousness. Roach, director of movies like the [three *Austin Powers* pictures](#) and, more recently, *Bombshell*, isn't about to give up on the big-movie experience easily.



The Roses is funny, but there's something piercing about it too. We know these two are right for each other, for the long haul; why can't they see it? But their problems are also so universal that watching them struggle is weirdly comforting. [Andy Samberg](#) and [Kate McKinnon](#) play Ivy and Theo's closest friends, a longtime married couple, and at one point, a desperate Theo goes to Samberg's Barry for advice. "How do you and Amy make it work?" he asks. "I dunno," Barry answers. "Inertia." It's a flippant answer, but there's truth in it, too. Sometimes just going along from day to day can get you further than you think.

The open-ended conclusion of *The Roses* may be the best thing about it. We need to imagine a happy ending for these two, but Roach isn't about to hand it over easily. Ivy and Theo's love will transcend time, even if it ends up tearing them apart. The movie's end-credits song is a wry, mischievous cover of The Turtles' sunshine-and-flowers ode to romantic bliss "Happy Together," sung by Susanna Hoffs (of the Bangles, and also Roach's wife) and Rufus Wainwright. Though it's ostensibly a joyous song, there's something clear-eyed and cautious about it too. It's a song about two people believing so strongly in joint happiness that they're certain they can will it into being, even if they're a little nervous about making the thing work long-term. And then a line in the song bursts forth like a sunrise: "I can't see me loving nobody but you,

for all my life.” That’s true of the Roses, for better or worse. They’ve taken the lines “Til death do us part” seriously. Not even a messy divorce could tear them asunder.

<https://time.com/7312098>

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Task Is Another Excellent Crime Drama From the Creator of *Mare of Easttown*

Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on [*Ted Lasso* and modern masculinity](#) won a New York Press Club award in 2022.



Crime dramas, especially in our distracted times, tend to front-load said crimes. More often than not, there's a murder within the first five minutes. This is only one of the genre's many implicit rules that HBO's *Task* breaks. Premiering Sept. 7, the series from [*Mare of Easttown*](#) creator Brad Ingelsby opens with a montage of quotidian scenes from the lives of two men. Weary Tom Brandis ([Mark Ruffalo](#)) folds his hands in prayer, dunks his face in a sink full of ice water, downs Advil while driving. Rugged Robbie Prendergrast ([Tom Pelphrey](#)) carries his sleeping son to bed, pours himself a tall mug of coffee, perks up at a radio ad for a dating app.

These tender parallel portraits introduce the characters whose analogous circumstances and divergent choices are, more than any

murder or mystery, the show's central subject. Like *Mare*, but slightly more elegant in its plotting, *Task* uses the detective-story format and the specificity of its rural Pennsylvania setting to explore elemental human problems. Whereas the former revealed the many ways in which the responsibility for keeping families and communities together falls on women (an observation that informs the new series as well), Ingelsby's latest makes an astute study of guilt, revenge, and forgiveness.



Task's dual protagonists fall on opposite sides of the law. Still hurting a year after his wife left him and their two kids, Robbie works in sanitation with his best friend, Cliff (Raúl Castillo). Recently, they've been meeting up at night with a third friend to rob trap houses. The men disguise themselves from targets who might recognize them, mostly members of a biker gang called the Dark Hearts, with Halloween masks; they brandish guns but avoid violence. As far as felonies go, the bloodless armed robbery of drug dealers ranks low on the moral-outrage scale—until a victim catches a glimpse of one assailant's face. Then, suddenly, Robbie and his boys are murderers.

An FBI veteran on career-fair recruitment duty in the wake of his wife's death, Tom is tapped to head a task force investigating these crimes. (Hence the show's bland title.) His staff, culled from a

hodgepodge of local law-enforcement groups, is green. While Anthony (Fabien Frankel) chats amiably, Aleah (*The Underground Railroad* star Thuso Mbedu, who should really be getting more of this kind of work) is all business. Lizzie (Alison Oliver), a young divorcée, just seems like a mess. Meanwhile, Tom's adopted son, Ethan (Andrew Russel), is in jail awaiting trial; Tom and his teenage daughter, Ethan's biological sister Emily (Silvia Dionicio), must decide whether to support him in court despite the unimaginable pain he has caused their family.



While the similarities between Tom's and Robbie's lives pile up as the series progresses, the most crucial connections are immediately apparent. Both men are fathers who love their children fiercely but have come somewhat unmoored since losing their wives. (In lieu of criminal activity, Tom drinks too much.) In defiance of their respective tough-guy roles, both are also preternaturally gentle, thoughtful, vulnerable. That their contradictions cohere into believable personalities is a credit to Ruffalo and especially Pelphrey, whose plaintive delivery of lines like “I need a life companion” could shatter your heart.

There are moments when *Task* belabors the comparison between its two leads, though never to the extent that Ingelsby's ruminations derail a story that only works so well thanks to its richly shaded

characters. This is not a tale of good guys vs. bad guys. Villains emerge, to be sure. But the real, rarer and less predictable conflicts are the internal struggles of people whose laudable intentions bump up against desperate situations. This liberates the show from the crime-investigation-arrest plot arc typical of this genre without robbing it of suspense. Episodes are propelled, instead, by rising tensions around the impossible choices characters must make. It's easy to do the right thing until someone wrongs you. How does a good person respond when someone hurts the people they love?



It's refreshing that in a series so concerned with masculine burdens and bonds between men, many of these multilayered characters are female. As in *Mare*, young women are forced, often by the actions of the men in their lives, to grow up early. Robbie has moved into the home of his late brother, whose 21-year-old daughter, Maeve (Emilia Jones, excellent), would leave town in a second if the family could survive without the domestic labor she exhaustedly performs. Emily is torn between the gratitude she feels compelled to show Tom for taking her in and loyalty to Ethan. There's more to Lizzie and Aleah than is initially apparent (although I would have liked to see *Task* go a bit deeper into Aleah's life outside work).

Task subverts expectations without sanctimony. It acknowledges that violent criminals can have kind hearts, that law-enforcement leaders can be as corrupt as biker-gang bosses, and that sometimes when something tragic happens, punishing the person who's nominally responsible doesn't always constitute justice. In a subtly radical statement, at a time when many Americans instinctively sort strangers into political categories, it refuses to stereotype characters based on their tribe. Tom is a former priest as well as an FBI agent, but he's no saint; it would be boring if he were. The show's emphasis on forgiveness, rather than justice as defined by a flawed legal system, follows from Tom's faith as well as from the grace it gives to each character. Even if they can't avoid the consequences of their worst decisions, they can work to ensure that they aren't ultimately defined by them.

<https://time.com/7311384>

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BoJack Creator Reinvents Adult Animation—Again—with Netflix’s Long Story Short

Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on [Ted Lasso and modern masculinity](#) won a New York Press Club award in 2022.



The conventions of the animated family sitcom haven’t changed much in the 36 years since *The Simpsons* set the template for shows like *King of the Hill*, *Family Guy*, and *Bob’s Burgers*. True to the cartoon medium, the characters are outsize and their adventures over the top. And, in a custom that has been key to their longevity, time doesn’t really pass from season to season. Unencumbered by the growing or deteriorating bodies of human actors, these series are set in an eternal quasi present, within which cultural references are constantly updated yet (with the exception of a recent *Hill revival* that fast-forwards eight years) everyone stays around the same age.

In Netflix’s *Long Story Short*, *BoJack Horseman* creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg uses the elasticity of animation to warp time in a very different way, dropping in on a singular Jewish family a

couple dozen times from the 1990s to 2022 (and once in 1959). Funny, idiosyncratic, philosophical, and warm, if occasionally more sentimental than *BoJack* fans might like, it ties together generations-spanning threads of love and resentment to create an intricate web of characters and relationships.



At the center of that web are siblings Avi, Shira, and Yoshi Schwooper, whose last name progressively combines those of their father Elliott Cooper (voiced by Paul Reiser) and mother Naomi Schwartz (Lisa Edelstein). Eldest son Avi (Ben Feldman) is introspective, self-righteous, determinedly secular. Anger defines Shira ([Abbi Jacobson](#)), the middle child. Their much younger brother, Yoshi (Max Greenfield), is the oddball of a family that, as Avi's quiet, blond girlfriend notices in the premiere, was never itself a paragon of laid-back normalcy.

As it yokes formative scenes from the Schwoopers' youth to vignettes that trace the impact of those moments on their adult lives, *Story* takes up [Jewish identity](#) as a central theme. Yiddish words pepper conversations. The [Holocaust](#) is never far from anyone's mind. One standout episode recounts Shira's wife Kendra's ([Nicole Byer](#)) circuitous conversion to the faith. Competing visions of and attitudes toward Judaism arise. (While [Oct. 7](#) falls outside of the first season's time frame, *Story* has already been renewed, and I hope it will have the courage in Season 2 to probe this fraught era for Jews around the world.)

Naomi is such an archetypal Jewish mother—pushy, controlling, critical, passive-aggressive, self-dramatizing—that she often reads as a caricature. But she is also, we eventually discover, its heart.

Bob-Waksberg has an eye for humorous details that ring true. Paired with a great voice cast and scribbly animation that translates the Schwoopers' angst into visual terms, he gives us sly parodies of '90s alt-rock posters on the walls of Avi's boyhood bedroom, a surreal allegory where wolves run loose at a middle school, and lines like “Uh-oh, Mom’s personality is starting.” Yet *Story* also contains the universal, meaning-of-life-level insights that made *BoJack* a classic and his trippy, underacknowledged Amazon series *Undone* just as enthralling. Like those shows, it is fascinated—and moved—by our subjective experiences of relationships and of time, and how the stories we tell ourselves about those things make us the people we are.

<https://time.com/7311165>

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The 46 Most Anticipated Movies of Fall 2025

Rosenstock is a contributor for TIME.



Two Stephen King adaptations, two Richard Linklater movies, the end of *Downton Abbey*, and Paul Thomas Anderson's biggest movie budget yet? I'm not complaining. This fall's film slate may have its fair share of unnecessary sequels and reboots, but there's a lot on offer for fans of any genre. Here are the most exciting movies to look out for as we head toward chillier weather.

***Twinless* (Sep. 5)**

James Sweeney wrote, directed, and starred in the underrated comedy-drama *Straight Up* back in 2019. But his follow-up could be a real breakout; after all, it already won the Audience Award at this year's Sundance Film Festival. Sweeney and Dylan O'Brien play two young men who begin filling a void in each other's lives after meeting at a support group for people whose twins died.

***The History of Sound* (Sept. 12)**

Paul Mescal and Josh O'Connor play lovers in [Oliver Hermanus'](#) historical melodrama set during and after World War I. Based on screenwriter Ben Shattuck's short story of the same name, the film follows two men who fall in love at the Boston Music Conservatory—and reconnect after the war ends, traveling through rural Maine to record the folk songs of their fellow countrymen.

***Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale* (Sept. 12)**

At last, the *Downton Abbey* franchise is coming to a close. The third and final film takes place in the 1930s, so the Crawley family and their staff will be grappling with social change, alongside public scandal and financial difficulties. This last chapter features the return of most of the main cast alongside new additions Joely Richardson, Alessandro Nivola, Simon Russell Beale, and Arty Froushan.

***The Long Walk* (Sept. 12)**

Having directed four of the five *Hunger Games* movies so far, Francis Lawrence is familiar with dystopian worlds and deadly games where only one player makes it out alive. So he's a natural fit for an adaptation of Stephen King's 1979 novel, published under his pseudonym Richard Bachman. The story follows 100 young men in a walking contest where they must maintain a rate of at least four miles per hour—or die.

***Spinal Tap II: The End Continues* (Sept. 12)**

Over 40 years ago, Rob Reiner directed and co-wrote the original *This Is Spinal Tap*, a mockumentary comedy also written by its starring trio: Christopher Guest, Michael McKean, and Harry Shearer, playing members of the fictional heavy metal band Spinal Tap. Now the whole gang is back together for an unlikely sequel about the band's reunion and final show, with big-name cameos

including Paul McCartney, Elton John, Garth Brooks, and Lars Ulrich.

***The Lost Bus* (Sept. 19, on Apple TV+ Oct. 3)**

Matthew McConaughey plays a heroic real-life bus driver in this intense survival drama based on a book about the deadliest wildfire in California history: the [2018 Camp Fire](#), which led to 85 deaths. Paul Greengrass' take on the disaster follows the story of the bus driver, tasked with getting a teacher (America Ferrera) and 22 students to safety.

***Predators* (Sept. 19)**

Nearly 18 years after NBC's *To Catch a Predator* went off the air, the TV show has a complex legacy. Did Chris Hansen's televised sting operations actually do any good? Is it even ethical to juice thrills out of attempted sex crimes to begin with? David Osit's documentary, which earned acclaim at Sundance this year, explores these questions and more.

***A Big Bold Beautiful Journey* (Sept. 19)**

Seth Reiss' script for this romantic fantasy was originally featured on the Blacklist, but now it's coming to theaters with South Korean-born director and video essayist Kogonada ([Columbus](#), *After Yang*) on board. Starring Margot Robbie and Colin Farrell on a surreal adventure through memories and dreams, it's likely to be Kogonada's most commercial and accessible tear-jerker yet.

***Him* (Sept. 19)**

“What would you sacrifice to become the greatest of all time?” asks this sports horror film from director Justin Tipping and producer Jordan Peele. Like *Whiplash* for football players, the

movie centers on a retiring star athlete (Marlon Wayans) who trains a younger talent, pushing him to risk everything.

***One Battle After Another* (Sept. 26)**

It's almost shocking that Paul Thomas Anderson hasn't worked with Leonardo DiCaprio before now. PTA's second movie inspired by Thomas Pynchon—he previously adapted *Inherent Vice*—is an action thriller that borrows elements from Thomas Pynchon's 1990 novel *Vineland* while shifting the story to the present day. PTA was given his largest budget yet for this one, which also stars Teyana Taylor, Sean Penn, Regina Hall, Benicio Del Toro, and *Presumed Innocent* breakout Chase Infiniti.

***The Smashing Machine* (Oct. 3)**

Benny Safdie's first film without his brother Josh's involvement is, in some ways, a change of pace. It's a biographical sports drama about former wrestler and MMA fighter Mark Kerr, here played by an unrecognizable *Dwayne Johnson* in his most ambitious role in years. Could this herald a new prestige era for the Rock?

***Anemone* (Oct. 3)**

Daniel Day-Lewis has retired from acting twice now, and thankfully, neither time has stuck. His first role since *Phantom Thread* comes courtesy of a script he co-wrote with his son Ronan Day-Lewis, here directing his father in a complex, intergenerational family drama.

***If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* (Oct. 10)**

Rose Byrne has turned out consistently great performances throughout her career, most recently in comedic fare like the Apple TV+ series *Physical* and *Platonic*. But her lead role as a working

mom in this stress-inducing psychological comedy drama could provide her best performance yet. Even better: The supporting cast includes ASAP Rocky, tagging along for his [second big role of the year](#), and Conan O'Brien as an uncharacteristically serious passive-aggressive therapist.

***Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Oct. 10)**

Based on Manuel Puig's 1976 novel of the same name and the Tony-winning stage musical, *Dreamgirls* and *Beauty and the Beast* director Bill Condon's musical drama stars Diego Luna and Tonatiuh as Valentin and Molina, two cellmates under Argentina's military dictatorship who unexpectedly connect. Jennifer Lopez also stars as Ingrid Luna, the luminous star of Molina's favorite movie—a story represented as a film within the film, recounted to Valentin to pass the time.

***Roofman* (Oct. 10)**

Derek Cianfrance (*Blue Valentine*, *The Place Beyond the Pines*) hasn't directed a movie since 2016's [The Light Between Oceans](#), and this one is far different than anything he has done before. It's a crime comedy-drama based on the life of fugitive Jeffrey Manchester (here played by Channing Tatum), a real-life spree-robber who stole from McDonald's locations in the early 2000s by drilling and dropping through the rooftops—then escaped from prison and hid in the wall of a Toys "R" Us to avoid being found.

***Tron: Ares* (Oct. 10)**

The third installment in the *Tron* series comes 15 years after *Tron: Legacy*. The plot hits especially close to home in the age of A.I.: Ares is the name of an advanced program sent into the real world on a dangerous mission, making direct contact with humans for the

first time. Jared Leto plays the regenerating super-soldier embodiment of Ares.

***After the Hunt* (Oct. 10)**

The latest from Luca Guadagnino (*Call Me By Your Name*, *Challengers*) is also a star vehicle for Julia Roberts, playing a respected philosophy professor at Yale left with a moral dilemma when her colleague and close friend (Andrew Garfield) is accused of sexual assault by a student (Ayo Edebiri).

***A House of Dynamite* (Oct. 10, on Netflix Oct. 24)**



Kathryn Bigelow's first movie since the polarizing *Detroit* is a political thriller for Netflix about a group of White House officials dealing with an incoming missile attack. The stacked ensemble includes Idris Elba, Rebecca Ferguson, Jared Harris, Tracy Letts, Anthony Ramos, Greta Lee, and Renée Elise Goldsberry, among others.

***Ballad of a Small Player* (Oct. 15, on Netflix Oct. 29)**

Director Edward Berger's movie *All Quiet on the Western Front* won the Best International Feature Film Oscar two years ago, and his recent pope drama *Conclave* got even more attention. Now he's back to adapt another novel: Lawrence Osborne's *Ballad of a Small Player*, which follows Lord Doyle (Colin Farrell), a gambler hiding from his past in Macau, China.

***It Was Just an Accident* (Oct. 15)**

Like many of Jafar Panahi's films, which deal with political oppression and injustice in Iran, his latest was made without official filming permission from the government. Filmed in secret, the movie features actresses without their compulsory hijabs—and it won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, a result that Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof [called](#) “a powerful blow to the machinery of repression in the Islamic Republic.”

***Frankenstein* (Oct. 17, on Netflix Nov. 7)**

Adaptations of Mary Shelley's iconic Gothic novel are a dime a dozen, but writer-director Guillermo del Toro could present a genuinely new vision with his take for Netflix. Oscar Isaac plays the mad scientist himself, with Jacob Elordi playing Frankenstein's monster.

***The Mastermind* (Oct. 17)**

Josh O'Connor plays a '70s family man getting by as an art thief in the new heist film from Kelly Reichardt. It's an unusual genre for a filmmaker known best for her [naturalistic, slice-of-life dramas](#), but she puts her own stamp on it. This is also [Alana Haim's](#) first major screen role since *Licorice Pizza*, which is reason enough to check it out (though you can also catch her in a small part in that director's latest, *One Battle After Another*).

***Black Phone 2* (Oct. 17)**

Scott Derrickson drew heavily from Joe Hill's horror short story of the same name for the first *Black Phone* movie, which followed a teenage boy named Finney (Mason Thames) who survived an encounter with a serial child killer called the Grabber (Ethan Hawke) through communicating with his other victims on a mysterious phone. Much of the same cast (and the phone) returns for the sequel, which involves a dangerous stalker at a winter camp called Alpine Lake.

***Stiller & Meara: Nothing is Lost* (Oct. 17)**



In the years following the death of Ben Stiller's parents, comedy legends Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara, he sought a way of honoring and celebrating them. So he made this documentary about the mark they left on Hollywood, pop culture, and Stiller himself.

***Good Fortune* (Oct. 17)**

Aziz Ansari's career as a screenwriter really took off with *Master of None*, the Netflix series he co-created with Alan Yang. But now he's graduating to the big leagues with his feature directorial debut, a comedy about a "budget guardian angel" (Keanu Reeves) who body-swaps a man (Aziz Ansari) and his boss (Seth Rogen), only to lose his wings when his lesson fails.

***Blue Moon* (Oct. 17)**

The first of two Richard Linklater releases this fall unfolds on a single evening: March 31, 1943, the opening night for Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* The protagonist here, though, is the depressed and alcoholic songwriter Lorenz Hart (Ethan Hawke, who else?), waiting to congratulate his former creative partner Richard Rodgers (Andrew Scott) and grappling with his own jealousy and insecurities.

***Hedda* (Oct. 22, on Prime Video Oct. 29)**

Nia DaCosta has directed one indie crime drama, one [horror sequel](#), and one Marvel movie, with an announced [28 Years Later sequel](#) to come. But her newest is something totally different from any of those: a reimagining of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, with Tessa Thompson in the titular role.

***Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere* (Oct. 24)**

Jeremy Allen White sports a pair of brown contact lenses for his role as the Boss in Scott Cooper's new musical biopic. Structured around the making of Springsteen's 1982 album *Nebraska*, the movie explores a turning point in the man's life—and as White's first real lead role on the big screen, it could be big for him, too. Jeremy Strong plays his longtime manager Jon Landau.

***Bugonia* (Oct. 24)**

Yorgos Lanthimos's streak of [Emma Stone collabs continues](#) with this sci-fi black comedy, an English-language remake of the 2003 South Korean film *Save the Green Planet!* In Lanthimos's version, two conspiracy theorists (Jesse Plemons and Aidan Delbis) kidnap a powerful CEO (Emma Stone), convinced she's an alien here to destroy the planet Earth.

***Nouvelle Vague* (Oct. 31, on Netflix Nov. 14)**

The first of Richard Linklater's two fall movies, *Blue Moon*, largely takes place in a single location on a single night. His second one also takes us behind the scenes of famous artists—in this case, director Jean-Luc Godard (Guillaume Marbeck) and *Breathless* stars Jean Seberg (Zoey Deutch) and Jean-Paul Belmondo (Aubry Dullin). Linklater has crafted a celebration of an early and deeply influential film of the *Nouvelle Vague* era, but also a pleasant hangout comedy.

Read more: [Richard Linklater's Breathless Tribute Nouvelle Vague Is an Inside Baseball Movie for Everyone](#)

***Wake Up Dead Man* (November TBA)**

The third installment in Rian Johnson's *Knives Out* series will feature a darker, more Gothic aesthetic and tone following the idyllic Greek isles setting of *Glass Onion*. Daniel Craig returns as the ever-reliable detective Benoit Blanc, this time joined by Josh O'Connor, Glenn Close, Josh Brolin, Mila Kunis, Jeremy Renner, Kerry Washington, Andrew Scott, Cailee Spaeny, Daryl McCormack, and Thomas Haden Church.

***Peter Hujar's Day* (Nov. 7)**

Ira Sachs coaxed out one of Ben Whishaw's best performances in 2023's [Passages](#). In Sachs' latest, Whishaw is playing the title role:

the photographer Peter Hujar, whose black-and-white portraits received public recognition after his death in 1987. Set in New York City in 1974, the biopic particularly focuses on Hujar's friendship with writer Linda Rosenkrantz (Rebecca Hall), who once published a transcription of Hujar describing a single day in his life.

***Sentimental Value* (Nov. 7)**

Renate Reinsve broke out internationally with her lead role in Joachim Trier's *The Worst Person in the World*, a decade after her debut in Trier's *Oslo, August 31st*. Her third collaboration with the director, a big hit out of Cannes this year, centers on two estranged sisters, Nora (Reinsve) and Agnes (Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas), who confront their washed-up film director father (Stellan Skarsgård) after their mother dies.

***Predator: Badlands* (Nov. 7)**

Dan Trachtenberg directed one of the best ever *Predator* movies with 2022's *Prey*—so it's no surprise he was chosen to spearhead two more films this year, including the animated *Predator: Killer of Killers* and now the live-action *Badlands*. This one, which stars Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi as a young Predator outcast named Dek and Elle Fanning as a “synthetic” named Thia, takes place on the Predators' home world.

***Die, My Love* (Nov. 7)**

Jennifer Lawrence's first movie role since *No Hard Feelings* could be a meaty one, based on director Lynne Ramsay's track record as a director of psychological dramas. She and Robert Pattinson star as a passionate, happy couple whose marriage starts to fall apart after a cross-country move and a pregnancy upset their delicate balance.

Read more: *Jennifer Lawrence Gives Her Best Performance Yet in the Postpartum Fever Dream Die, My Love*

***Train Dreams* (Nov. 7, on Netflix Nov. 21)**

Joel Edgerton plays a logger in this thoughtful, philosophical drama based on the 2011 novella by Denis Johnson. It earned strong acclaim at Sundance, including comparisons to Terrence Malick.

***Jay Kelly* (Nov. 14, on Netflix Dec. 5)**

Noah Baumbach teamed up with Emily Mortimer to write this comedy-drama about the friendship between a global superstar actor (George Clooney) and his loyal manager (Adam Sandler) during an impromptu trip to Europe. Laura Dern, Riley Keough, and Greta Gerwig are just a few of the big names making up the rest of the ensemble.

***Keeper* (Nov. 14)**

Osgood Perkins has been churning out the [horror movies](#) lately, this one anchored by the always-reliable Tatiana Maslany. She's playing a wife who encounters an evil presence while on a romantic anniversary trip to a remote cabin with her husband (Rossif Sutherland).

***The Running Man* (Nov. 14)**

This is the second film adaptation of Stephen King's 1982 dystopian novel of the same name, and it's also the second King adaptation this fall—along with being Edgar Wright's first flick since the polarizing *Last Night in Soho*. Glen Powell plays Ben Richards, a contestant on the titular game show who must spend 30 days running from hitmen to earn a billion dollars.

***Rental Family* (Nov. 21)**

The Japanese filmmaker Hikari directed this comedy-drama about an American actor (Brendan Fraser) who works for a rental family service in Tokyo and plays stand-in roles in other people's lives.

***Wicked: For Good* (Nov. 21)**

Last year's box office-breaking [film adaptation](#) of the famous stage musical *Wicked* (itself based on a 1995 novel) only covered the first act, ending with a cliffhanger following the “Defying Gravity” performance. *For Good*, also directed by Jon M. Chu, will pick up the story of Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) and Galinda (Ariana Grande) five years later, as their new roles of Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good challenge their close friendship.

***Eternity* (Nov. 26)**

What if, once we die, we get to choose whom to spend eternity with? That's the premise of this fantasy romantic comedy set in heaven. Elizabeth Olsen plays Joan, who must make a tough decision: live forever with the husband (Miles Teller) she knew best and longest, or go back to the first love (Callum Turner) she lost in the war?

***Zootopia 2* (Nov. 26)**

Judy Hopps (Ginnifer Goodwin) and Nick Wilde (Jason Bateman) are working on a new case together in this sequel to the 2016 buddy cop comedy. This time, they're pursuing a pit viper named Gary De'Snake (Ke Huy Quan), and they'll need to go undercover to find him.

***The Secret Agent* (Nov. 26)**

The title might make this one sound like a classic spy movie, but it's nothing of the sort. The fourth feature film by Kleber Mendonça Filho (*Bacurau*), which received universal acclaim at Cannes this year, is a political thriller set in the final years of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Wagner Moura plays a teacher fleeing persecution in 1977 Recife.

***Hamnet* (Nov. 27)**



Chloé Zhao took a break from heavy dramas to direct a poorly received Marvel movie, but this one could be her return to form—especially thanks to co-writer Maggie O'Farrell, adapting her own 2020 novel. The story tells a fictional account of William Shakespeare (Paul Mescal) and his wife Agnes (Jessie Buckley) grieving their 11-year-old son Hamnet (Jacobi Jupe).

***Father Mother Sister Brother* (TBA)**

Adam Driver delivered arguably his best performance in Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*, and offered his deadpan comedic chops to *The Dead Don't Die*. So it's exciting to see him in the cast for Jarmusch's upcoming anthology film, which also stars Cate Blanchett, Vicky Krieps, and Mayim Bialik.

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The 48 Most Anticipated TV Shows of Fall 2025

Ford is a contributor for TIME.



Can you smell that? It's the scent of coffee shops dusting off their pumpkin spice syrup bottles. And can you hear that? It's the faint sound of *Gilmore Girls* la la la-ing their way back into your 'Continue watching' feed now that the temperature is teasing us by dropping a degree or two. But before you sink back into an old faithful rewatch (we listen and we don't judge!), make sure you check out all the new things that are coming your way this fall as well.

You've got hotly-anticipated debuts like [Ryan Murphy](#)'s *All's Fair*, [Glen Powell](#)'s *Chad Powers*, and [Rachel Sennott](#)'s *I Love LA*; reboots and reworks of some old faves, like *The Office* spiritual-spin-off *The Paper* and *IT: Welcome to Derry*; and returning shows like the second part of *Wednesday*'s latest season and the final end to *Stranger Things* after almost a decade of *kind of* being on our screens.

Here are the most anticipated TV shows of the fall.

New Shows

All's Fair (Hulu)

Date TBA

High gloss, campy drama? Check. A completely bonkers assemblage of stars that spans Oscar nominees and reality TV mainstays? Check. An ensemble collection of icy women with sharp outfits and even sharper bobs throwing jabs at each other? It's a new Ryan Murphy joint. *All's Fair* brings together Kim Kardashian, Sarah Paulson, Naomi Watts and Glenn Close (IMDB cast lists are being written on a level we've never seen before) as a team of high-powered divorce lawyers. Do we need to know much more? The fewer specifics we get of a Ryan Murphy brainchild, the better. Expect enough backstabbing, saucy secrets, and nonsensical cameos to more than make up for the loss of *And Just Like That*.

The Chair Company (HBO)

Date TBA

Wake up, there's a new Tim Robinson vehicle for your boyfriend to start obsessively quoting. Robinson is bringing his particular brand of insanity to us in a new way, thanks to this new half-hour comedy series about a man who starts investigating a far-reaching conspiracy after a humiliating incident at work. We'd say to expect the usual when it comes to Tim Robinson, but that's an impossible task. *The Chair Company* is co-created by frequent Robinson collaborator Zach Kanin and executive-produced by Adam McKay.

The Paper (Peacock)

Sept. 4

Ever wondered what a *The Office*-style mockumentary would be like against the decaying landscape of the print media world? No, we hadn't either. But Greg Daniels, who adapted *The Office* for the US, did, and he's delivered a kind of pseudo-sequel where the only returning cast members are the unseen documentary crew and Oscar Martinez (Oscar Nuñez). Domhnall Gleeson stars as the new editor-in-chief of a flopping Toledo newspaper tasked with revitalising its output. The necessary cohort of kooky side characters includes *The White Lotus*'s Sabrina Impacciatore, Alex Edelman, Ramona Young, Tim Key and Chelsea Frei.

Task (HBO)

Sept. 7

In the landscape of movie megastars taking the small screen, Mark Ruffalo has been conservative in his offerings. Bar 2023's *All the Light We Cannot See* and 2020's *I Know This Much Is True*, the Oscar nominee has mostly stuck to the dimensions he knows best. But this changes with *Task*, the new series from *Mare of Easttown* creator Brad Ingelsby, where Ruffalo dusts off a tried and tested prestige TV move—that of an FBI agent with some mysterious trauma forced to confront while he delves into the criminal underworld. In this series, that trope manifests as Ruffalo tasked to take down a gang running a spate of violent home robberies, led by Tom Pelphrey.

The Girlfriend (Prime Video)

Sept. 10

If there's one thing that goes down so smooth once the nights draw in and the concept of being bundled up on your couch takes favor over being outside, it's a psycho-sexual thriller series. *The Girlfriend* sees Robin Wright in front of and behind the camera as

the rich, loving (read: maybe overbearing) mother whose precious baby boy (adult man) brings home his new girlfriend, played by Olivia Cooke. Wright's Laura is convinced that Cooke's Cherry is hiding something, but is that just boy mom paranoia coloring her perspective, or is something seriously shady happening?

***Black Rabbit* (Netflix)**

Sept. 18

If *Succession* taught us one thing, it's that we love messy inter-familial drama set against the backdrop of the bougie New York elite. Well, that and the importance of marking up your will clearly. In *Black Rabbit*, we're back with more family strife in the form of Jude Law and Jason Bateman playing brothers squabbling over the family's restaurant and bar that's now the hottest ticket in NYC. Law plays the head of the restaurant, while Bateman plays his troubled sibling who, with his return, brings in all sorts of drama and danger. Serendipitously, *Succession*'s Dagmara Dominczyk also co-stars.

***The Lowdown* (FX)**

Sept. 23

TV in the 2020s has taken a shine to Western aesthetics and ideals (just look at the juggernaut that is the *Yellowstone* Cinematic Universe). *The Lowdown* plants us in the heart of Tulsa, with Ethan Hawke's Lee Raybon, a gritty, hard-boiled sleuth obsessed with uncovering the corruption at the heart of the city. Naturally, his latest case takes him on a path of mystery and unravelling secrets. The show is the latest project from *Reservation Dogs* creator Sterlin Harjo.

***Wayward* (Netflix)**

Sept. 25

Mae Martin is known for making us laugh and swoon with their comedy specials and the TV rom-com *Feel Good*, but now they're ready to give us goosebumps with *Wayward*, a new genre-bending series that follows the sinister world of the troubled teen industry in a small, *Twin Peaks*-style town that paints its sinister vibe with a veneer of something wholesome. Martin stars as a police officer who starts looking into a mysterious school and its cultish leader (played by Toni Collette).

The Savant (Apple TV+)

Sept. 26

Is it possible to stop a mass shooting before it happens? That was the question posed by a *Cosmopolitan* article back in 2019 that followed a woman known as 'The Savant', who infiltrated online groups to prevent large domestic incidents, and what this new Apple TV+ series is based on. Jessica Chastain stars as the mysterious 'Savant' who worms her way into these forms, and she also executive produces the series.

Chad Powers (Hulu)

Sept. 30

It's no longer Glen Powell summer, but with *Chad Powers*, we can make it Glen Powell fall. Powell stars as the titular Powers in the series that he also co-created and co-wrote with Michael Waldron. The show is loosely based on the experience of Eli Manning when he donned prosthetics to go undercover at Penn State football tryouts. The pair have taken this conceit and reworked it to be about a football player who, after blowing his college career, dons a whole new disguise, that of Chad Powers, and tries to win it all back.

Boots (Netflix)

Oct. 9

Netflix's *Boots* takes us into the world of the Marine Corps and the world of Cameron Cope, played by Miles Heizer, and his best friend Ra McAffey, played by Liam Oh. The series, a comedic drama set in the 90s, is inspired by Greg Cope White's memoir *The Pink Marine* about his time coming-of-age and navigating his sexuality when it was illegal to be openly gay in the military, in the belly marine boot camp. The book has been described as a unique look at how all different walks of life find themselves and learn their limits in the Marine Corps.

The Last Frontier (Apple TV+)

Oct. 10

True Detective's last season gave us cold cops in the frigid Alaska climate, and now *The Last Frontier* is planting us back on the ice with more criminal activity. Jason Clarke plays a US Marshal in Alaska whose life is turned upside down when a prison plane carrying dozens of inmates crashes in his jurisdiction, setting all the inmates free. Think *Con-Air*, but with more snowshoes.

Devil in Disguise: John Wayne Gacy (Peacock)

Oct. 16

Dramatised retellings of some of history's most depraved serial killers have done well for the streamers in recent years, and now it's time for one of America's most iconically terrifying murderers to get his own limited series. John Wayne Gacy, the man known as the 'Killer Clown' due to his public life as a party performer away from his moonlighting grift as a murderer, racking up more than 30 male and child victims, will be played by *Severance*'s Michael

Chernus. Elsewhere in the cast, you have Gabriel Luna, Michael Angarano and Chris Sullivan.

Mr. Scorsese (Apple TV+)

Oct. 17

After decades behind the camera, it's time for Martin Scorsese to be put under the spotlight with this five-part documentary about his life and work, all told through interviews with some of the iconic friends and collaborators he's racked up over the years, like Robert De Niro, Steven Spielberg and Mick Jagger. Director Rebecca Miller was apparently given 'unrestricted access' to Scorsese's personal archive to round out the project, making it arguably the most comprehensive look at the iconic director in history.

IT: Welcome to Derry (HBO Max)

Oct. 26

If there's one nostalgia-bait IP worth mining, it's probably *It*. With a monster that's been enacting a reign of terror every 27 years for generations, there's plenty of Pennywise backstory to sift through. The HBO Max series is a prequel series to the wildly popular *It* and *It Chapter Two* films and will take place in the 1960s, deep-diving into Derry's most malevolent force. Bill Skarsgård will reprise his role as the iconic child-killing clown, and will be joined by Jordan Adepo, Chris Chalk, James Remar, Stephen Rider, and Madeleine Stowe.

Talamasca: The Secret Order (AMC)

Oct. 26

The AMC Anne Rice Cinematic Universe is extending its reach with *Talamasca: The Secret Order*. The show will be the third

offering from Rice's novels, following *Mayfair Witches* and *Interview with the Vampire* (arguably one of the best shows on TV right now). *Talamasca*, which will feature IWTV alum Eric Bogosian, focuses on the secret society tasked with keeping track and keeping in line all the witches and vampires littered across the world. Nicholas Denton will lead the series as Guy Anatole, who's been brought into the secret order after being marked since childhood.

***Down Cemetery Road* (Apple TV+)**

Oct. 29

Apart from the dystopian series *Years and Years* back in 2019, Emma Thompson has mostly shied away from TV since its ascent as the new home of mega movie stars. But in *Down Cemetery Road*, she will star alongside prestige TV veteran Ruth Wilson as a private investigator who helps uncover the mystery of a child who goes missing in the aftermath of a house fire. As the pair unravel more secrets than they expected, the life they thought they understood seems to have entirely turned on its head.

***I Love LA* (HBO)**

Nov. 2

Rachel Sennott's upcoming HBO series is one of the most-hyped things on the fall slate. Having become a new Gen Z it girl, thanks to roles in *Bottoms* (2023), *Shiva Baby* (2020), *Bodies Bodies Bodies* (2022) and as arguably one of the only redeeming aspects of The Weeknd's *The Idol* (2023), Sennott seemingly received a blank check from HBO to assemble a cohort of cool kids and make, well, anything she wants. The result is a show about a codependent group of friends reuniting in Los Angeles that will star Odessa

A'zion, Jordan Firstman, Josh Hutcherson, Leighton Meester, and Elijah Wood. Say no more!

***All Her Fault* (Peacock)**

November 6

Following her stellar run on *Succession*, Sarah Snook will be back on our TV screens in *All Her Fault*, the story of a mother's worst nightmare. She stars as Marissa Irvine, who, upon picking up her son from a playdate at a friend's house, is greeted by someone she doesn't recognise and who claims to have never even heard of her son before. The series, based on the book by Andrea Mara, also stars Dakota Fanning, Jake Lacy, Sophia Lillis and Michal Peña.

***Death by Lightning* (Netflix)**

Nov. 6

After wrapping up the political bloodbaths of Westeros years ago, David Benioff and D.B. Weiss are turning to more recent, and real, history. The series follows the life of James Garfield, the 20th US president, played by Michael Shannon, and his death just six months into his presidency at the hand of Charles Guiteau, his one-time greatest admirer, played by Matthew MacFadyen. The series will also star Nick Offerman, Betty Gilpin, and Bradley Whitford.

***Pluribus* (Apple TV+)**

Nov. 7

If you make *Breaking Bad* and *Better Call Saul*, arguably two of the greatest shows of the prestige TV era, you're allowed to never work again. But Vince Gilligan didn't get that memo, so he's back with a new offering, the sci-fi drama *Pluribus*. Not much is known about the series except that it's set in Albuquerque (like his

previous shows), has a similar tone to *The Twilight Zone*, and has a weird and wonderful teaser trailer that gives nothing away. The series has already been commissioned for two seasons by Apple TV+.

The Beast in Me (Netflix)

Nov. 13

From the creator of *The X Files* comes *The Beast in Me*, a new Netflix series starring Matthew Rhys and Claire Danes. The series follows a reclusive author (Danes) who becomes obsessed with her new neighbour (Rhys), a real estate mogul who was once the lead suspect in his wife's disappearance. If it sounds like your usual cut-and-dry domestic thriller, think again, because we've been promised something a little more twisty-turny than that.

The American Revolution (PBS)

Nov. 16

Veteran filmmaker Ken Burns is arguably the auteur of factual American history programming, and now he is turning his eyes to the modern birth of the nation—the American Revolution. The 10-part PBS series will take an expansive look at the figures behind the war—from political and military leaders, Native soldiers and British officers—that wrote part of the history of this country.

Returning Shows

With Love, Meghan S2 (Netflix)

Aug. 26

Following its first series in March, Meghan Markle is back with a new instalment of her Martha Stewart-lite foray into the

unflappable hostess with the mostest industrial complex. She's not reinventing the wheel here – the series is mostly just a revolving door of accessible DIYs, crafts, recipes, celebrity friend cameos, and kitchen porn – but it's sure to be the kind of show you put on to have on.

Wednesday S2 P2 (Netflix)

Sept. 3

A lot's been going on so far in this season of *Wednesday*, thanks, in part, to Netflix's weird obsession with chopping their story arcs into two parts. The last instalment of this season (the show has been renewed already for a third), will bring with it the return of Gwendoline Christie's presumed-dead Principal Weems, and Nevermore will open its gates to the mother of all monsters, literally Mother Monster herself, Lady Gaga, in an as-yet unknown role. She will also release a new song for the series, so you can probably expect another viral *Wednesday* dance challenge to litter your TikTok FYPs at the same time.

Only Murders in the Building S5 (Hulu)

Sept. 9

It's a testament to the strength of *Only Murders in the Building* as a cosy piece of TV excellence that they can keep murdering people in the vicinity of the same three people and it never feels like a stretch. For this season, the murder gang's beloved doorman, Lester, dies in mysterious circumstances, so they do what they do best – kind of somehow figure out who the murderer is through a series of mostly shoddy detective work. Known for corralling A-listers, *Only Murders* will see Keegan-Michael Key, Renée Zellweger and Logan Lerman joining the cast this season.

Gen V S2 (Prime Video)

Sept. 17

After a very long hiatus, *Gen V* is finally back for a second season, with school back in session for this new generation of supes. This season will focus around a new mysterious figure, as Hamish Linklater joins as the school's new dean, and the events of the extended *The Boys* universe bleed into everyday life at Godolkin University. Tragically, the series had to account in its story for the real-life passing of Chance Perdomo, who starred as Andre Anderson.

The Morning Show S4 (Apple TV+)

Sept. 17

After launching Reese Witherspoon into space last season, where else could *The Morning Show* possibly go? As of right now, the exact plot of the high-sheen soap is under wraps, but if the previous seasons' plucking of current affairs is anything to go by, we can probably predict a few real-world events that could make good fodder for some story. What we do know is that it's continued to amass a roster of names rivalled only by *Only Murders in the Building*. This season, Jeremy Irons, William Jackson Harper, Aaron Pierre, and Marion Cotillard will all join the show's cutthroat world of TV news.

The Golden Bachelor S2 (Bravo)

Sept. 24

Following the runaway success of its first season (and a following *Golden Bachelorette* season), 66-year-old former NFL star Mel Owens is looking for love this season as the newest *Golden Bachelor*. Somehow, he's already whipped up controversy by

saying he won't date women who are over 60, which is awkward, considering so many of his hopeful matches are over that threshold.

***English Teacher* S2 (FX)**

Sept. 25

While it was one of the more critically acclaimed shows of 2024, it was still a surprise that Brian Jordan Alvarez's *English Teacher* series picked up a second season. After he was accused of sexual assault by a former collaborator, it was unclear if the series would end in a one-and-done order. But FX appears to be pushing ahead. Alvarez denied the allegations, saying to [Vulture](#) that his behaviour was "not only consensual but actively encouraged." The next season of the comedy series will continue to follow Alvarez's Evan Marquez, an English teacher at a high school in Texas, figuring out how to be himself at work.

***Slow Horses* S5 (Apple TV+)**

Sept. 25

Slow Horses has lived by its namesake, slowly but surely cementing itself as one of the best and most consistently good shows in recent history – with a production schedule to match (it's already been renewed for two more seasons after this). Gary Oldman's Jackson Lamb, the de facto leader of a bunch of down-on-their-luck spies, will be back in Slough House for more adventures based on Mick Herron's series of books. Not much is known about the new season, except that it's been described as 'topical'.

***Abbott Elementary* S5 (ABC)**

Oct. 1

Quinta Brunson's critically acclaimed comedy mockumentary series set in the walls of an underserved Philadelphia public school will be back for a fifth season, just a few months after its fourth season wrapped up. Shows releasing on an annual schedule? We forgot we could live like this.

Love Is Blind S9 (Netflix)

Oct. 1

By now, we probably should have worked out whether love really is blind, thanks to eight seasons of Netflix's grand experiment. But even with the data on hand, the series is just too juicy, messy and addictive to let go. We'll be heading back into the pods with a new cast of singles who try and figure out whether they can fall in love without seeing their partner.

Monster: The Ed Gein Story (Netflix)

Oct. 3

After the success of their foray into the twisted minds of Jeffrey Dahmer and the Menendez Brothers, Netflix and Ryan Murphy are turning their *Monster* lens onto arguably one of the most depraved killers in history – Ed Gein. Charlie Hunnam will play the notorious murderer who, among other things, fashioned trinkets and furniture out of the corpses from robbed graves. Not exactly light and breezy stuff, but when has that ever been Murphy's style?

Elsbeth (CBS)

Oct. 12

We are all for an extended universe of shows that don't match in tone (here to claim that *She-Hulk* was good, actually!). *Elsbeth* takes the world of *The Good Fight* and *The Good Wife* and flips it on its head as a dramedy, bolstered by a rotating cast of comedic guest stars. Carrie Preston will return as Elsbeth Tascioni, an NYPD detective and attorney investigating a series of howdunits. This season, Julia Fox joins the alum roster of guest stars that includes Nathan Lane, Stephen Colbert, Matthew Broderick, and Amy Sedaris.

***Matlock* S2 (CBS)**

Oct. 12

Matlock was one of the surprise hits of the 2024 TV slate, so it's no surprise it got quickly snapped up for a second season. Kathy Bates stars as a septuagenarian lawyer, and even in its first episode, the series turned the premise on its head, meaning viewers didn't really know what to expect. Given the bombshells it dropped at the end of its first run of episodes, it's clear the second season will have similar twists and turns.

***Loot* S3 (Apple TV+)**

Oct. 15

TV is always good when Maya Rudolph is on it. *Loot*, the series where Rudolph stars as Molly Wells, a newly minted billionaire on a search for self-discovery, ended its second season on somewhat of a cliffhanger, with Wells boarding her plane with Nicholas, her assistant, played by Joel Kim Booster, after pushback from fellow billionaires for being 'too philanthropic' for their liking. The new season will continue the show's premise of trying to give away all of Wells' vast fortune, but no doubt there will be some roadblocks along the way.

The Diplomat S3 (Netflix)

Oct. 16

If there's one thing *The Diplomat* loves, it's a cliffhanger. The first season wrapped up with a mystery over whether Rufus Sewell's Hal Wyler was dead (spoiler: he lived), and the second ended with Alison Janney's Grace Penn assuming the presidency right after Keri Russell's Kate Wyler accuses her of staging a terrorist plot. Now, Kate is her VP – awkward! *The Diplomat* is such a hit that a fourth season has already been commissioned, even before Season 3 hits our screens.

Nobody Wants This S2 (Netflix)

Oct. 23

The series that finally let Adam Brody become the romantic lead thousands of teenage girls had clamoured for 20 years ago, when he graced their screens as Seth Cohen in *The OC*, is coming back, and for that, we thank you, Kristen Bell. The hit rom-com about an unlikely match between a rabbi and a sex podcaster ended its first season on a surprisingly sentimental note, with Brody's Noah choosing his love for Bell's Joanne over his lifelong dream of becoming his synagogue's head rabbi. Season 2 will likely follow the fallout of that decision and all the calamities that will no doubt arise from it.

Mayor of Kingstown S4 (Paramount+)

Oct. 26

The Taylor Sheridan web continues its expansion with more *Mayor of Kingstown*, the series starring Jeremy Renner as the de facto mayor of a town in Michigan, constantly on the brink of war between its police force and organised crime underworld. Lennie

James, Edie Falco, and Laura Benanti have all joined this season as a new threat unfolds in Kingstown.

Selling Sunset S9 (Netflix)

Oct. 29

More mansions, more drama, more questionable decor and more deeply inappropriate office outfits. *Selling Sunset* will return for its ninth season, bringing us back into the fold of the catty world of luxury real estate selling in Hollywood.

The Witcher S4 (Netflix)

Oct. 30

It feels like forever ago that Liam Hemsworth was confirmed as taking over the role of Geralt of Rivia from Henry Cavill in the Netflix fantasy series (after Cavill left the show to play Superman for about three minutes), and it's almost time to finally see that come to fruition. The fourth outing will be the show's penultimate season, and will cover the *Baptism of Fire*, *The Tower of the Swallow*, and *Lady of the Lake* from Andrzej Sapkowski's series of books. Can the show pull off its ambitious lead switch-out?

Vince Staples Show S2 (Netflix)

November 6

Netflix has renewed the series loosely based on rapper Vince Staples' life for a second season. The often absurd slice of life series that follows the kind of famous, kind of not Staples around Long Beach, and ended its first season on a simple premise that it will likely continue in the new batch of episodes: that there are always more days to come and you have literally no idea what's going to happen in them.

***Palm Royale* S2 (Apple TV+)**

Nov. 12

In 2025, just because a series ends on a cliffhanger doesn't mean it's coming back for a second go—even if that cliffhanger involves a failed assassination attempt of Richard Nixon from a pistol hidden in a bouffant wig and a decades-old murder and identity snatch that hasn't yet come to light. Luckily, that isn't the case for *Palm Royale*, the candy-colored 60s dramedy starring Kristen Wiig as a social-climbing wannabe in 60s coastal Florida. Hopefully, we'll get some resolution to the first season's bombshell ending, and if that wasn't enough, Patti LuPone and John Stamos are joining the cast this time around as well!

***Selling the OC* S4 (Netflix)**

Nov. 12

Sun, sea and seriously cutthroat real estate agents in micro-miniskirts will return with the new season of Netflix's expansive Selling universe in Orange County, California. Expect hefty price tags and even heftier drama.

***A Man on the Inside* S2 (Netflix)**

Nov. 20

Following the *21 Jump Street* rule of undercover escalation, Ted Danson's professor-turned-detective from Mike Schur's *A Man on the Inside* will go from working undercover at an assisted living facility to going undercover at a college. This season, a whole new host of guest stars will join, including Max Greenfield, Jason Mantzoukas, David Strathairn, and Mary Steenburgen

Bel-Air S4 (Peacock)

Nov. 24

The reboot of Will Smith's iconic series *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, which landed the story of the fictionalised Smith ending up in the bougie neighbourhood of So-Cal from the mean streets of Philly in the present day, will finish its run with a fourth and final season. The last season left us with a bunch of cliffhangers, so there's plenty for the show to cover in its last outing.

Stranger Things S5 Vol 1 (ep 1-4) (Netflix)

Nov. 26

Stranger Things is ending, if you can believe it. Well, it's kind of ending, with yet another 2-part series drop. We genuinely never thought we'd see the day that the final offering of the Duffer Brothers' 80s nostalgia fest officially closed the doors to the Upside Down for good, almost a decade on from its 2016 debut. It's taken a few years to complete the last part of the story of Hawkins, but in case you forgot, the big bad Vecna managed to get its claws in the Indiana town once and for all, and we left the series with the Upside Down seemingly let loose on our real world. Seems like a big problem to fix, but that's what Eleven and the gang are there to do. Just don't ask who will die, because we're not sure we can handle the answer!

<https://time.com/7311662>

The 24 Most Anticipated Books of Fall 2025

Carlin is a contributor for TIME.

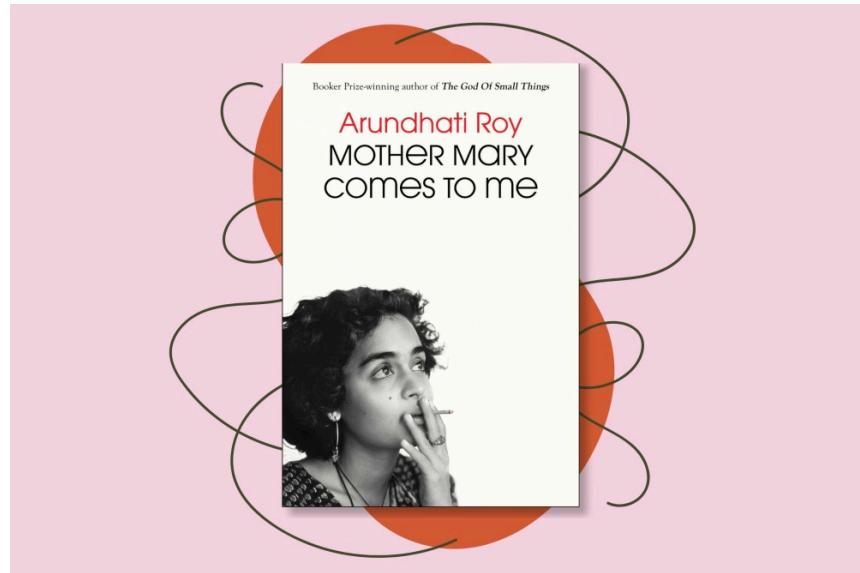


Say goodbye to your beach reads and hello to the most anticipated books of the fall. The upcoming season's new releases include [Margaret Atwood](#)'s long-awaited debut memoir, *Too Big to Fail* author [Andrew Ross Sorkin](#)'s deep dive into the [1929 Wall Street crash](#), and [Patricia Lockwood](#)'s mind-melting follow-up to her critically acclaimed 2021 novel, *No One Is Talking About This*.

Between Labor Day and Thanksgiving, the “queen of royal fiction” Philippa Gregory returns to King Henry VIII’s court with the story of [Anne Boleyn](#)’s sister-in-law. TIME editor at large and best-selling author of *Apollo 13* [Jeffrey Kluger](#) offers a cinematic retelling of the least appreciated—and most groundbreaking—space program in American history. [Elizabeth Gilbert](#) is back with her first nonfiction book in a decade, a memoir about reclaiming her identity after an unfathomable loss. [Salman Rushdie](#)’s latest—his third since he was [violently attacked onstage](#) in 2022—is a collection of stories that explore life’s final moments.

From [Bolu Babalola](#)'s steamy follow-up to her 2022 best seller *Honey and Spice* to an ecological thriller from [A Burning](#) author [Megha Majumdar](#), here are the 24 books you'll want to add to your fall reading list.

Mother Mary Comes to Me, Arundhati Roy (Sept. 2)



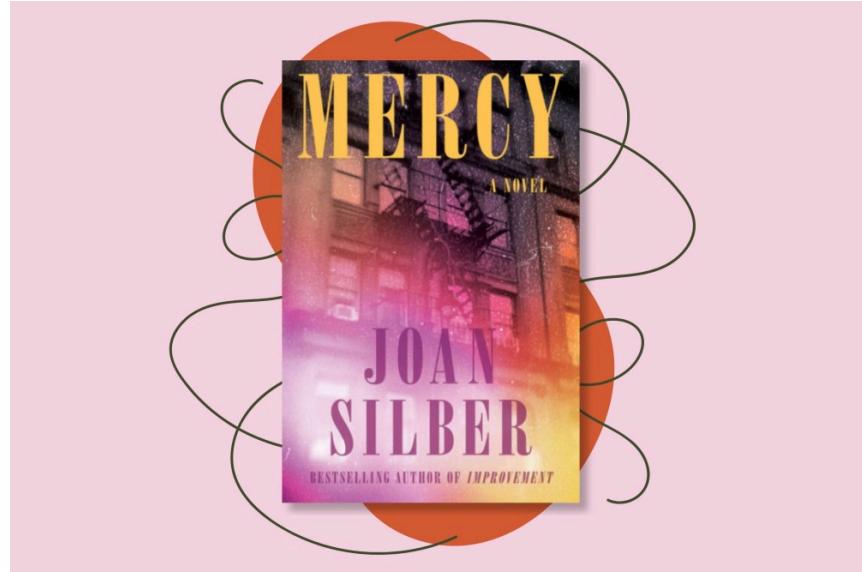
With her debut memoir, [Arundhati Roy](#) chronicles what it was like being raised by her mother Mary, an [influential educator](#) and formidable [women's rights activist](#) who was “a terror and a wonder to behold,” according to her daughter. At the age of 18, Roy left her mom’s unpredictably volatile home in order to get away from her behavior, but, also, as the Booker Prize-winning author explains, “to be able to continue to love her.” *Mother Mary Comes to Me* is a candid look at the shadow Roy’s charismatic late mother cast over the author’s life, work, and memories.

Sweet Heat, Bolu Babalola (Sept. 2)



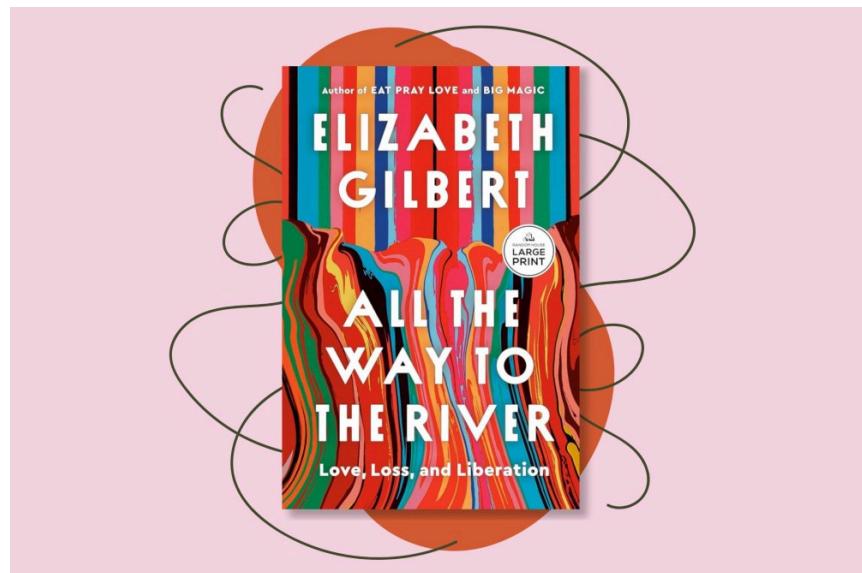
Kiki Banjo, the protagonist of Bolu Babalola's latest romance, *Sweet Heat*, hosts [a popular podcast](#) where she dishes out [modern love advice](#). But the 28-year-old hasn't had much luck in the relationship department lately. Several years earlier, she fell head over heels for a smooth-talking filmmaker named Malakai Korede, only for him to leave her for Hollywood. While she's since started seeing a wealthy app developer, she's never quite gotten over her ex whose career is soaring just as hers is beginning to languish. When she finds herself face-to-face with Malakai at her best friend's wedding—where not only is she the maid of honor, but he's the best man—she must ignore the spark that still burns between them. Unfortunately for her, that's easier said than done.

Mercy, Joan Silber (Sept. 2)



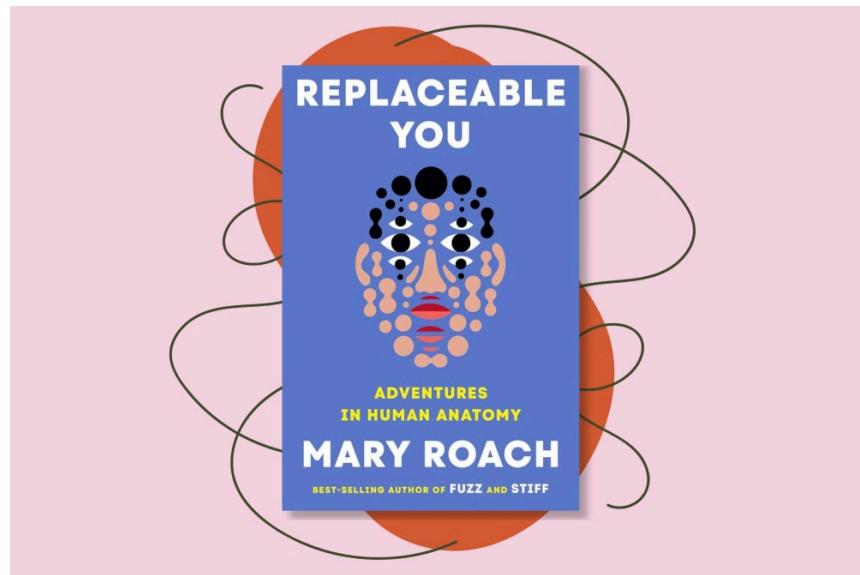
Joan Silber's tenth novel begins in an East Village apartment in the 1970s, where Ivan, a wayward cab driver, and his best friend, Eddie, a gregarious bartender, are experimenting with drugs. When Eddie suffers a heroin overdose, Ivan rushes him to the emergency room. Convinced that Eddie is going to die and he will be blamed for it, Ivan abandons him and never looks back. *Mercy* is an expansive tale about guilt and forgiveness that traces the ripple effects of one man's most regrettable decision over five decades.

All the Way to the River, Elizabeth Gilbert (Sept. 9)



Nearly 20 years after the release of *Eat Pray Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert returns with her fourth memoir, which recounts how losing the love of her life led to her salvation. In 2000, Gilbert met [Rayya Elias](#), a vibrant Syrian hairdresser and musician who would become one of her closest friends. Sixteen years later, when Elias was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic and liver cancer, the pair became lovers who shared everything—including their addictions. (Gilbert was addicted to love and sex, while Elias, who died in 2018, struggled with drug dependency.) *All the Way to the River* is a collection of stories, poems, journal entries, photos, and drawings that act as a loving tribute to Elias, an unfiltered descent into substance abuse, and an intimate look at Gilbert's hard fought road to recovery.

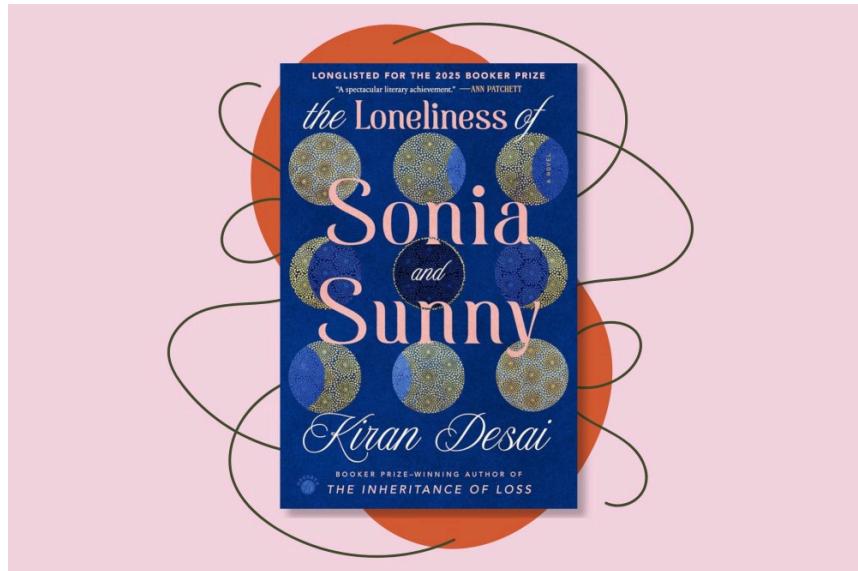
Replaceable You, Mary Roach (Sept. 16)



With her eighth nonfiction book, Mary Roach offers a fascinating tour of the wonderful world of regenerative medicine. Across 288 pages, she explores the earliest examples of cell repair, tissue engineering, and the creation of artificial organs. She interviews researchers, surgeons, pathologists, and [amputees](#) in an attempt to answer the difficult questions surrounding the creation, application, and efficacy of replacement body parts. She also travels to a burn unit in Boston, spends time in a [working iron lung](#) from the 1950s,

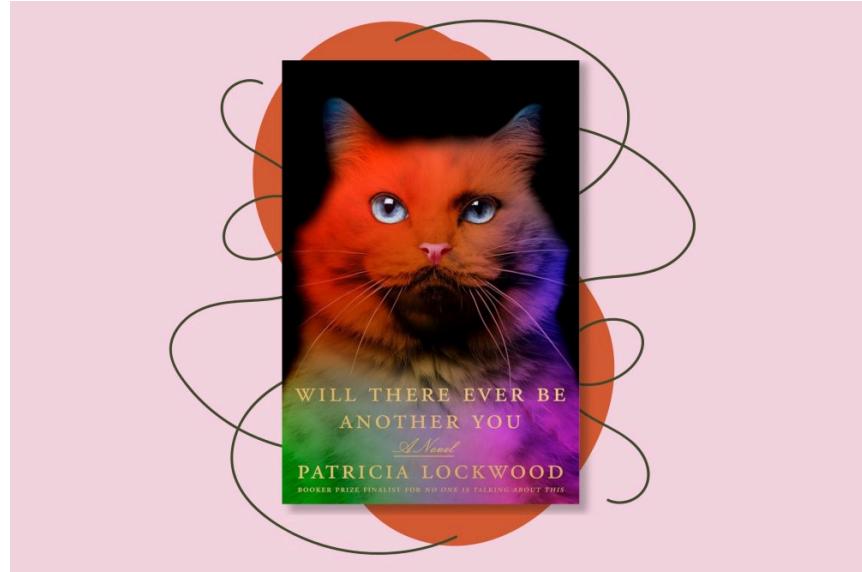
and visits a stem cell “hair nursery” in San Diego, to investigate the ever-expanding medical field firsthand.

The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny, Kiran Desai (Sept. 23)



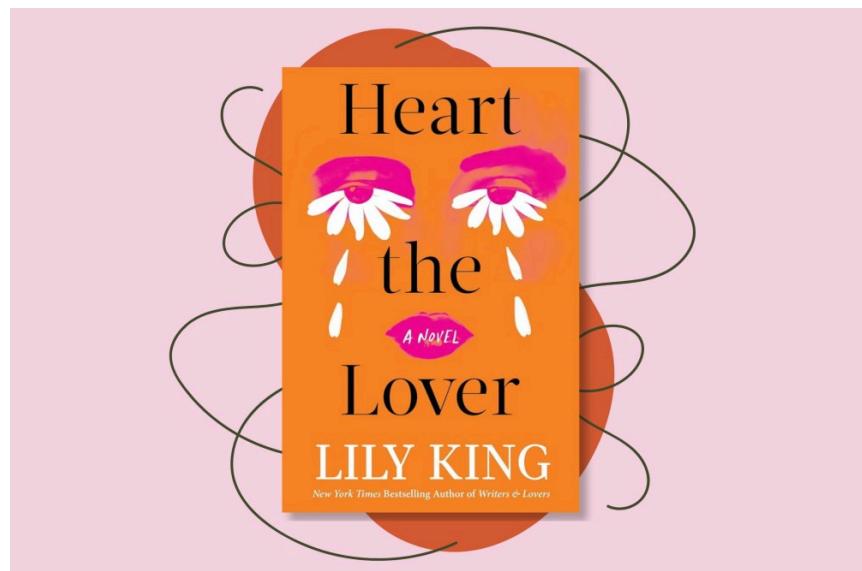
At nearly 700 pages, Booker Prize-winning author Kiran Desai’s *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny* is a sweeping romance that spans decades and continents. After finishing college in Vermont, Sonia, a lonely aspiring novelist, returns to her family in India. On her way there, she meets Sunny, a struggling New York-based journalist who her grandparents once tried to set her up with. The two never got around to meeting back then, but over the course of an overnight train ride, they realize that they have a lot more in common than just their meddling relatives. Specifically, they are both looking for an escape from their current situations. In this epic about love, writing, and destiny, the pair embark on a journey that will change their lives forever.

Will There Ever Be Another You, Patricia Lockwood (Sept. 23)



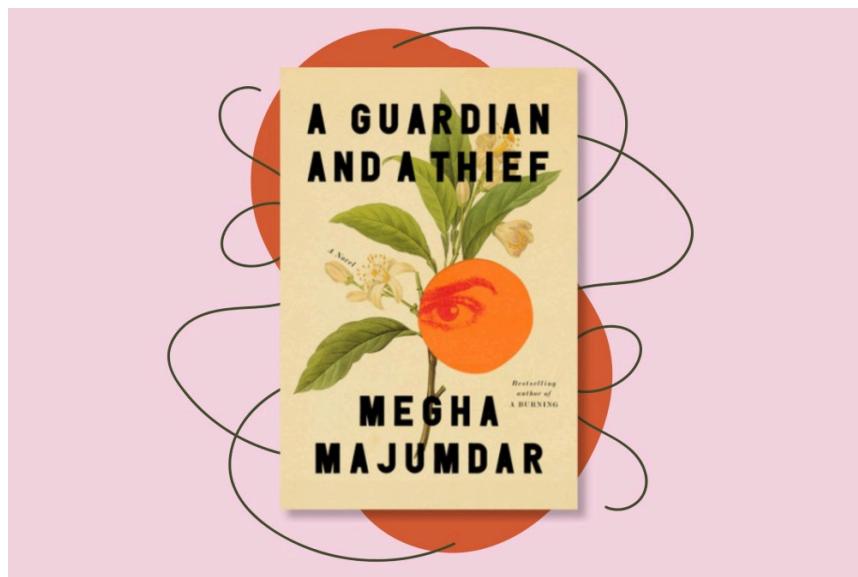
Priestdaddy author Patricia Lockwood's sophomore novel centers around a woman who is suffering from a mysterious neurological illness that has caused her to disconnect from reality. Inspired by Lockwood's own bout with COVID-19 in the early days of the pandemic, an unnamed author finds herself suffering from disorientation, short-term memory loss, and paranoid delusions amid a global catastrophe. *Will There Ever Be Another You* follows the protagonist's surreal trip down the rabbit hole to reclaim her identity.

***Heart the Lover*, Lily King (Sept. 30)**



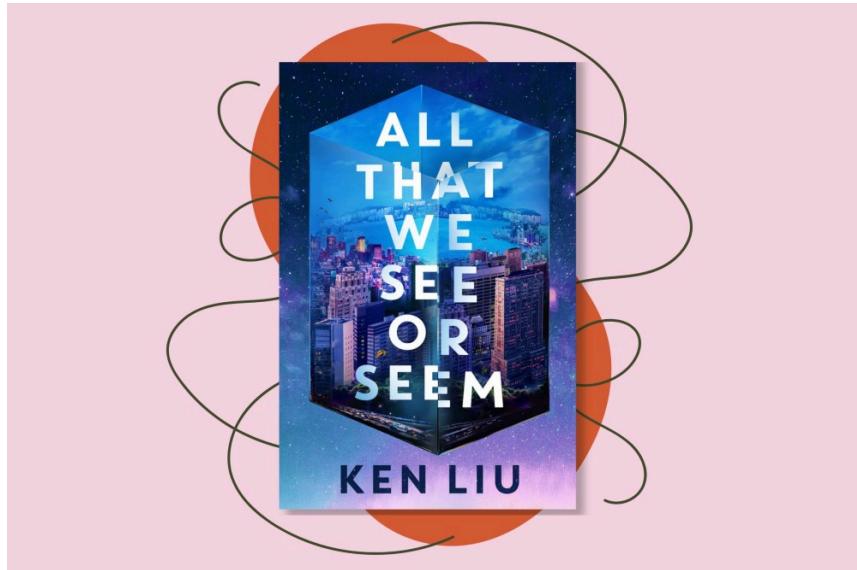
Best-selling author Lily King's sixth novel looks at a love triangle's lingering consequences. In her senior year of college, *Heart the Lover*'s protagonist, an English major who goes by the nickname Jordan, meets Sam, a snobbish classmate who quickly becomes her boyfriend. He teaches her about literature, religion, and obscure card games, but, more importantly, he introduces her to his brainy best friend Yash. When Jordan starts having feelings for Yash, the two begin a whirlwind affair that ends in heartbreak, resentment, and regret. Decades later, when the pair unexpectedly reunite, she is forced to confront the decisions she made in her youth in order to finally move on with her life.

A Guardian and a Thief, Megha Majumdar (Oct. 14)



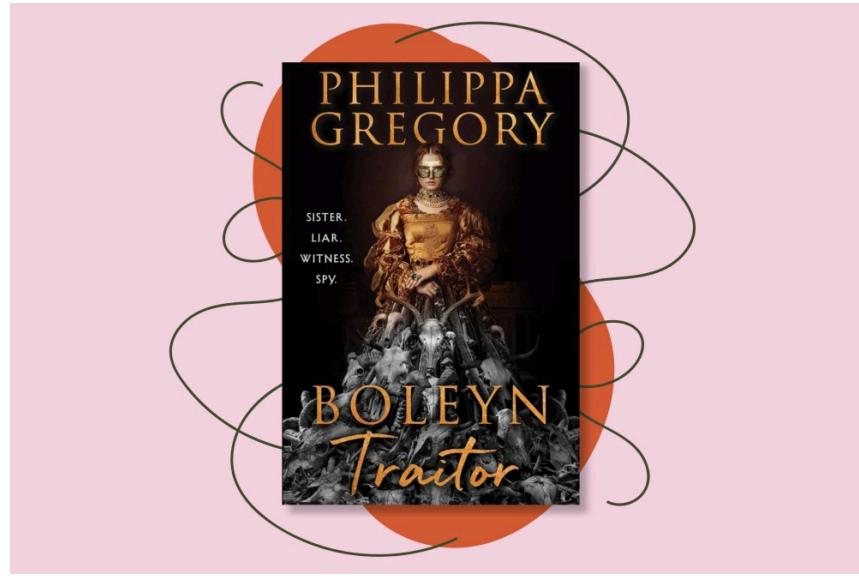
In a near-future India that has been destroyed by extreme heat, drought, and a devastating food shortage, Ma has a chance to flee to the United States with her two-year-old daughter and aging father. But a week before they're set to leave, she realizes that her purse with all their immigration documents inside is gone. Set over the course of seven days, Megha Majumdar's haunting second novel follows Ma as she embarks on an exhilarating search for her lost belongings and the person who stole them.

***All That We See or Seem*, Ken Liu (Oct. 14)**



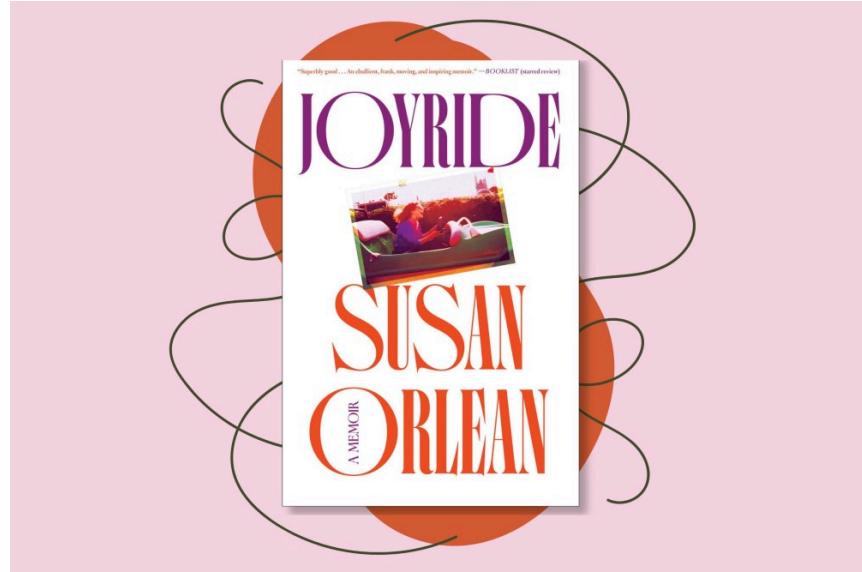
[Ken Liu](#) returns with *All That We See or Seem*, the first book in his forthcoming techno thriller series that centers around Julia Z, a famous 20-something hacker who has given up her high-stakes cyber punk life for a solitary existence in the Boston suburbs. That is until she's asked to find a woman who was recently kidnapped. The missing person in question is an artist named Elli, who created an immersive experience using dreams to combat loneliness. Elli's been taken by a mysterious crime boss with a connection to her artwork. In order to save her, Julia must solve an increasingly complex puzzle that forces her to question reality.

***Boleyn Traitor*, Philippa Gregory (Oct. 14)**



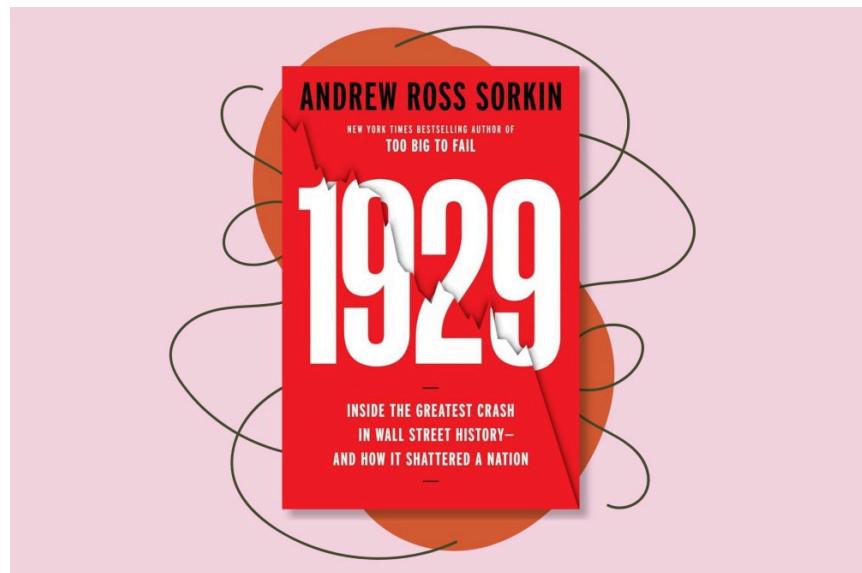
Almost 25 years after the release of her best-selling novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Philippa Gregory is back with a historical drama that focuses on a lesser known Boleyn girl. The *Boleyn Traitor* tells the story of Jane Boleyn, the sister-in-law of King Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn, who was beheaded after being found guilty of adultery, incest, and conspiracy against the crown. Historians believe it was Jane's allegedly fabricated testimony that led to Anne's tragic demise. But was Jane really a traitor or was she desperate to simply survive the royal court? This novel about ambition and betrayal looks to answer that very question.

Joyride, Susan Orlean (Oct. 14)



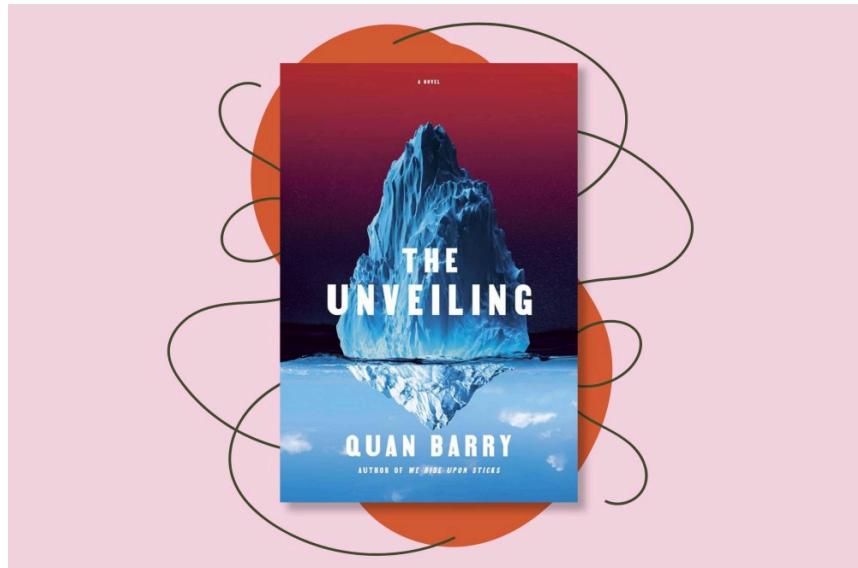
Susan Orlean, the author and journalist behind much celebrated works of literary nonfiction including 1998's *The Orchid Thief*, which later inspired the Spike Jonze film *Adaptation*, is looking inward. Her memoir, *Joyride*, takes a deep dive into her life, recounting the end of her first marriage, falling in love again, and becoming a mother while saying goodbye to her own. It also acts as a master class in journalism from a bygone era, offering insight into how the longtime *New Yorker* writer comes up with story ideas, crafts a compelling narrative, stays on deadline, and confronts writer's block.

1929, Andrew Ross Sorkin (Oct. 14)



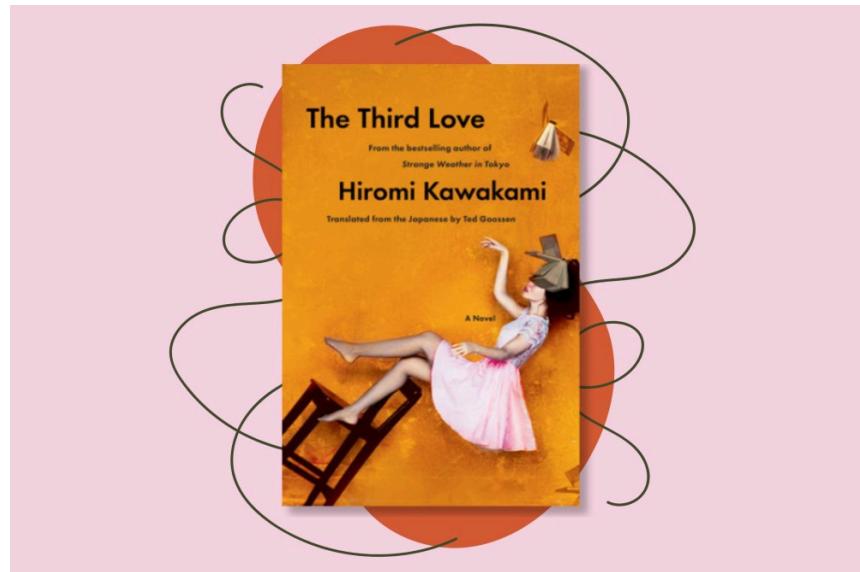
Andrew Ross Sorkin's follow-up to *Too Big to Fail*, which chronicles the events of [the 2008 financial crisis](#), dives deep into the [most infamous crash in Wall Street history](#). Using historical records along with newly uncovered documents, letters, diaries, and transcripts, *1929* looks at the cataclysmic event through the eyes of those most closely involved. Sorkin introduces readers to the politicians, visionaries, skeptics, and fraudsters who were involved in the era-defining moment, while also laying out the eerie parallels between those powerful 20th-century players and today's most formidable U.S. leaders.

***The Unveiling*, Quan Barry (Oct. 14)**



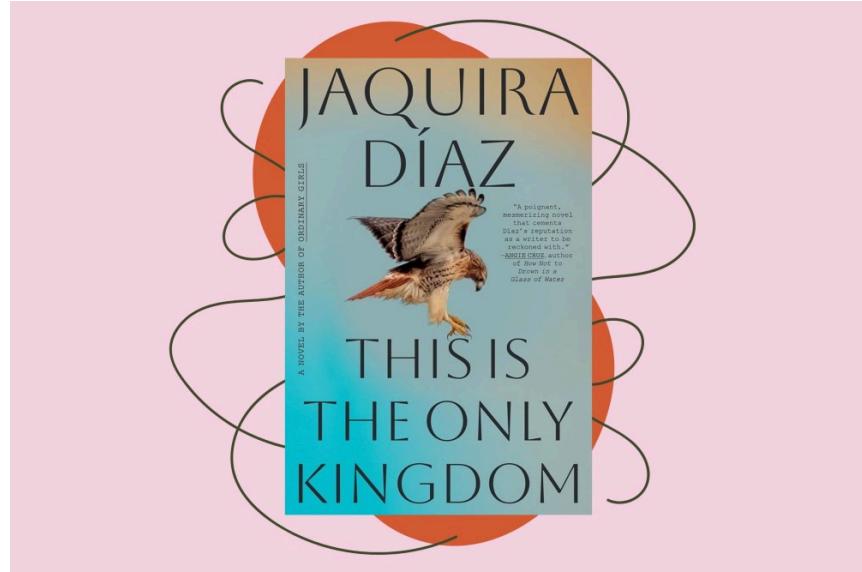
Author and poet [Quan Barry](#)'s horrifying new novel, *The Unveiling*, begins on a luxury cruise set sail for Antarctica. Striker, a film location scout, has been hired to check out the area for an upcoming big budget blockbuster. The project is about explorer [Ernest Shackleton's 1915 expedition](#) to the Antarctic and its doomed fate. When a freak accident leaves Striker, who is Black, and her fellow wealthy, mostly white passengers stranded on a remote island, she not only has to contend with her privileged shipmates, but the ghosts of shipwrecks past in this supernatural hair-raiser about identity, guilt, and survival.

***The Third Love*, Hiromi Kawakami (Oct. 21)**



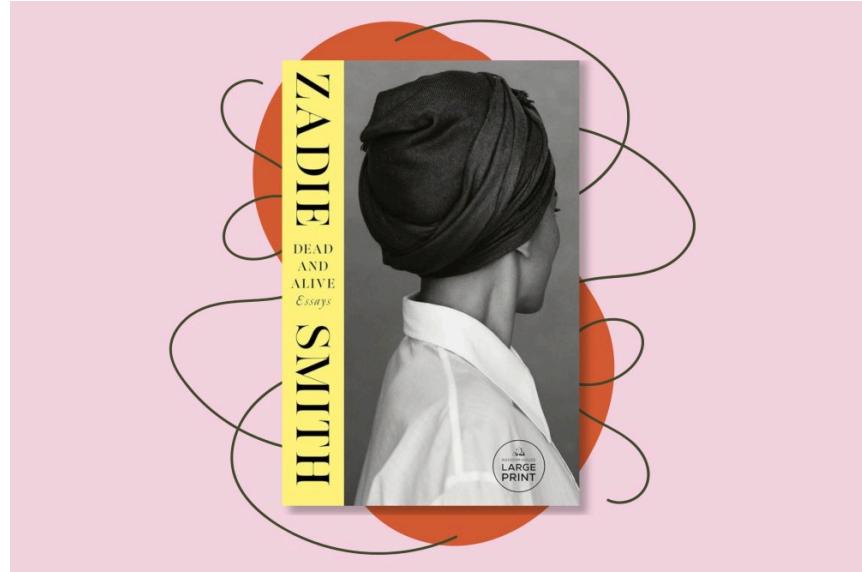
Hiromi Kawakami's 2020 novel, *The Third Love*, newly translated from the original Japanese by Ted Goossen, is a centuries-spanning historical romance set in Japan. After discovering that her husband is cheating on her, Riko is given an opportunity to magically escape her flawed reality and live inside her dreams. Each night she is able to give love another chance. But there's a catch: she's not appearing as herself in her fantasies. Instead, she takes on different identities, from a high-ranking 17th century courtesan to a handmaiden to a princess from the Middle Ages. In this time-traveling meditation on marriage, Riko reconsiders what it means to be a modern wife.

***This Is the Only Kingdom*, Jaquira Díaz (Oct. 21)**



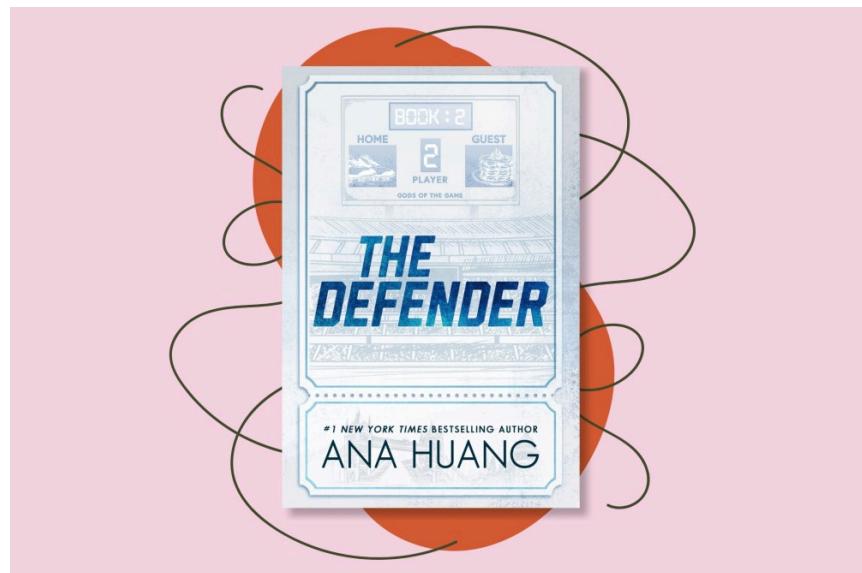
In Jaquira Díaz's debut novel, *This Is the Only Kingdom*, a mother and daughter deal with the fallout of a murder that rocks their tight-knit Puerto Rican community. In 1975, a 16-year-old house cleaner named Maricarmen falls in love with Rey el Cantante, a strong-willed musician and petty thief beloved by the barrio locals. But Maricarmen's mother disapproves of the relationship—and throws her daughter out of the house because of it. Newly on her own, Maricarmen discovers she's pregnant and is left to support herself and her baby girl after Rey goes on the run from the law. Fifteen years later, a shocking act of violence upends Maricarmen's life, forcing her to make a difficult decision that puts her already complicated relationship with her grown-up daughter in jeopardy.

Dead and Alive, Zadie Smith (Oct. 28)



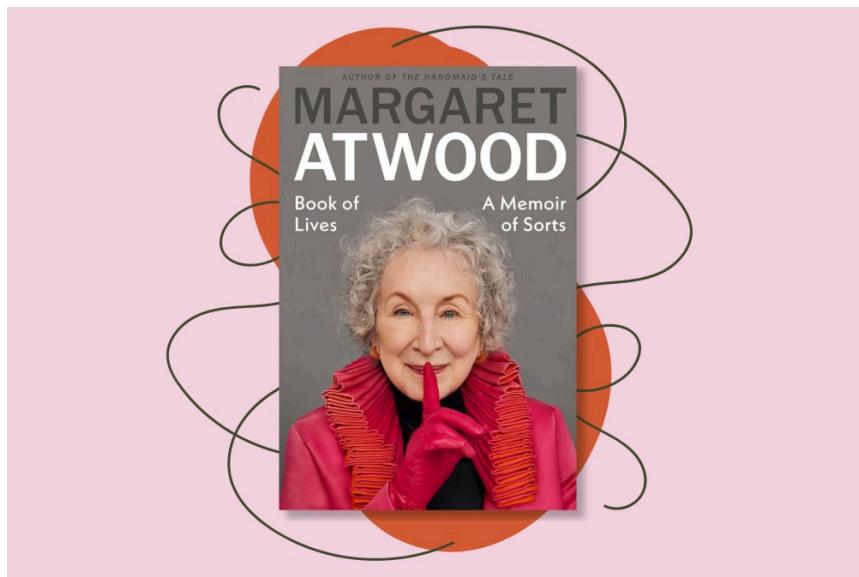
With her wide-ranging new essay collection, *Dead and Alive*, [Zadie Smith](#) finds light amid the darkness of our present moment by putting the focus on the art and artists that she admires most. Across 30 essays, Smith celebrates the work of painter [Kara Walker](#), critiques the themes of the 2022 Cate Blanchett film [Tár](#), interrogates what it means to be someone's muse, and pays tribute to the legacies of recently deceased authors [Joan Didion](#), [Martin Amis](#), and [Hilary Mantel](#).

***The Defender*, Ana Huang (Oct. 28)**



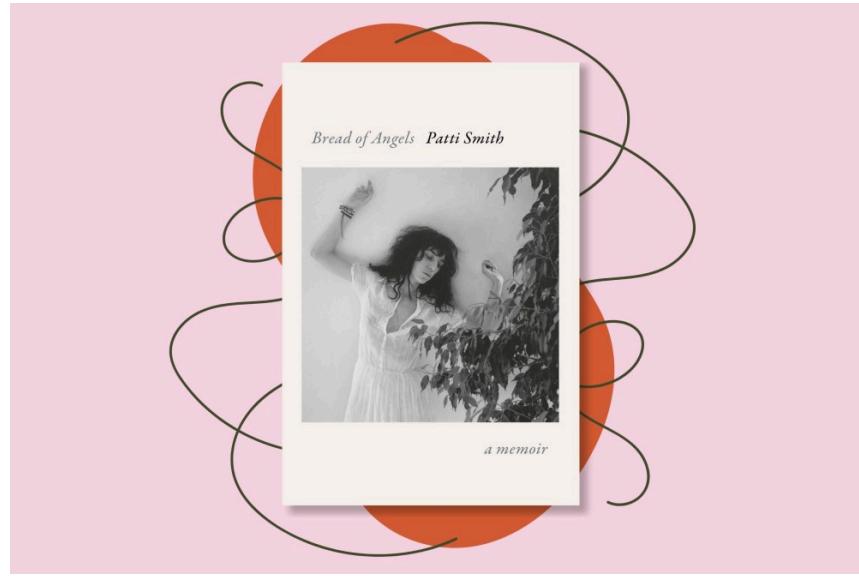
The Defender, the second book in best seller Ana Huang's *Gods of the Game* series, is a star-crossed sports romance set in the world of the English Premier soccer league. Vincent DuBois, the captain of the Blackcastle Football Club, is rich, successful, and in terrible danger after someone breaks into his home. To keep safe from the mysterious intruder, he secretly shares an apartment with sports nutritionist Brooklyn Armstrong, who also happens to be his coach's daughter and his sister's best friend. For years they've been at odds, but when they find themselves playing house and liking it, Vincent worries that catching feelings for Brooklyn might be his inevitable downfall.

Book of Lives, Margaret Atwood (Nov. 4)



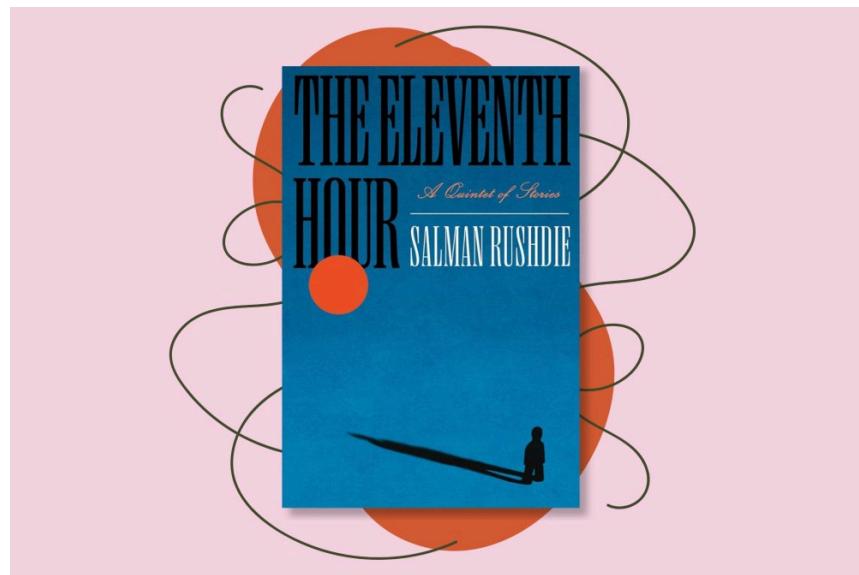
Margaret Atwood's long-awaited memoir acts as a travelogue through her unconventional life and celebrated career. In *Book of Lives*, she explores how a nomadic and often lonely childhood, often spent in the wild forest of Northern Quebec with her entomologist father and dietician mother, led to her becoming a writer. She reveals the real-life mean girl from her youth who inspired her 1988 novel, *Cat's Eye*, and details how living in Berlin in the 1980s influenced *The Handmaid's Tale*. She also writes about her [outspoken support for women's rights](#), [adventures in Hollywood](#), and decades-long marriage to novelist Graeme Gibson, who died in 2019.

Bread of Angels, Patti Smith (Nov. 4)



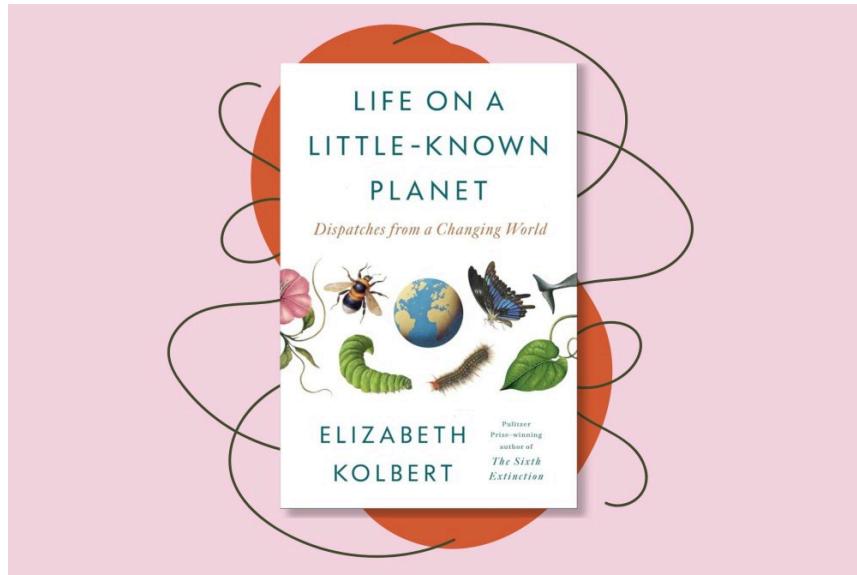
Fifteen years after the release of her National Book Award-winning debut memoir, *Just Kids*, Patti Smith is back with her fourth autobiography, which follows her unlikely rise from an imaginative working class kid to a punk rock icon. *Bread of Angels* covers Smith's hard scrabble adolescence in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the making of her seminal 1975 album, *Horses*, and her marriage to MC5 guitarist Fred “Sonic” Smith, who died in 1994 at the age of 46.

***The Eleventh Hour*, Salman Rushdie (Nov. 4)**



Salman Rushdie's latest release is a collection of five stories—three novellas and two shorter tales—set across India, England, and the U.S. that examine life, death, and what might come after. *The Eleventh Hour* includes stories about a musical prodigy from Mumbai who is hellbent on destroying her rich in-laws, the ghost of a Cambridge academic looking to enact revenge against his longtime tormentor, and a young American writer who is trying to solve the mystery of his mentor's unexpected death. Rounding out the quintet is a modern parable about freedom of speech and a piece about a feuding pair of old men dealing with their own personal tragedy amid a national disaster.

Life on a Little-Known Planet, Elizabeth Kolbert (Nov. 4)



Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist [Elizabeth Kolbert](#)'s latest release, *Life on a Little-Known Planet*, is a collection of essays on the wonders of nature and the [growing environmental threats](#) that risk destroying it. Across 17 pieces, most of which originally appeared in the [New Yorker](#), Kolbert takes readers around the globe to visit a carbon neutral island in Denmark, a melting Greenland ice sheet, and a Florida community that voted to give rights to waterways. She also introduces readers to those who are trying to protect our planet—a climatologist known as the

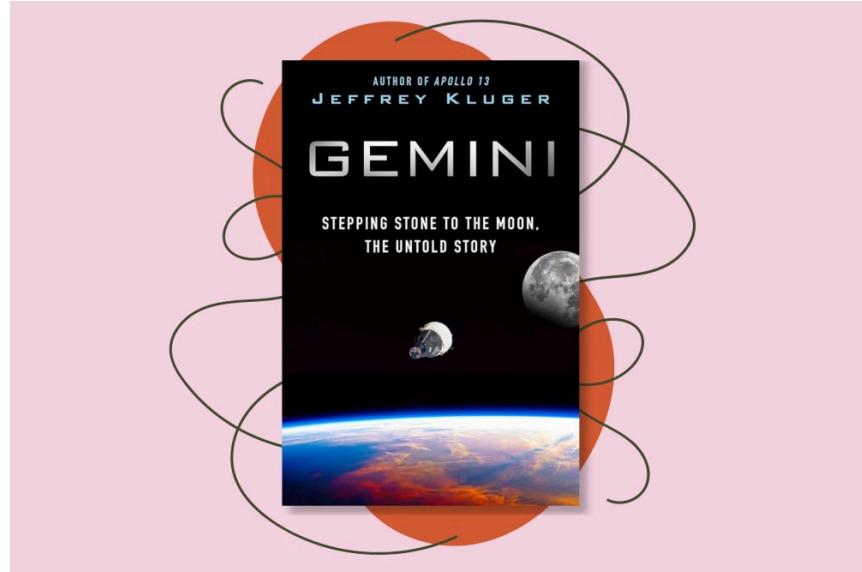
“father of global warming,” an entomologist racing to find rare caterpillars before they go extinct, and a biologist who is using AI to help humans communicate with whales—in hopes of encouraging others to do the same.

***Palaver*, Bryan Washington (Nov. 4)**



Palaver, award-winning author [Bryan Washington](#)'s follow-up to his 2023 novel, *Family Meal*, is an intimate look at a young gay man struggling to reconcile with his family. Since leaving his Houston home ten years prior, the story's protagonist has been working as an English tutor in Tokyo. In that time, he's managed to build a community of close friends, but he still struggles to understand why his Jamaican-born mother chose his homophobic brother over him. When she unexpectedly arrives at his doorstep looking to make amends, he must confront the trauma of his past by giving her an opportunity to process her own.

***Gemini*, Jeffrey Kluger (Nov. 11)**



In the early 1960s, as the Vietnam War raged and U.S. politicians called for cuts to the space program, NASA launched Project Gemini, a series of ten manned missions across 20 months in which the tools and techniques to successfully send the first man to the moon were developed. With his new book, TIME's [Jeffrey Kluger](#) tells the thrilling story of the pioneering program that sparked a feud with the Soviet Union, led to the tragic deaths of three astronauts, and ultimately helped the U.S. win [the Space Race](#).

<https://time.com/7311382>

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Laufey's New Album Is Her 'Most Daunting Project Yet'



With the release of her third album, *A Matter of Time*, [Laufey is showing the world](#) a new side of herself. Previously known for her wistful lyrics about unrequited crushes, the 26-year-old sings a different tune on this record: one about falling in love for the first time. “My first two albums are kind of just like, ‘Oh, I wonder what it will feel like, la di da, I’m falling behind,’” she said over a Zoom call last month, fresh-faced and cheery in the comfort of her Los Angeles home. “But this one is a lot more introspective and mature.”

Born in Iceland to a musical family (her mother is a violinist and her maternal grandparents were professors at China's Central Conservatory of Music), [Laufey](#) (pronounced *lay-vey*) blends the styles of jazz, classical, bossa nova, and contemporary pop with a precision that goes well beyond just "la di da." A multi-instrumentalist who plays cello, piano, and guitar, she calls the canon of the Great American Songbook her "bible." So much so that despite using modern-day lingo and the occasional swear word—"The proof says you're tragic as f-ck," she sings about a man with bad tattoos on "Tough Luck"—her music evokes a dreamy nostalgia for a bygone era. Her second album, *Bewitched*, took home a Grammy last year and she has easily made fans out of a who's who of musical icons, having befriended [Olivia Rodrigo](#) and duetted with the likes of [Barbra Streisand](#) and Norah Jonas.

A Matter of Time, out today, sees Laufey at her most lyrically vulnerable and her most sonically daring. She lays bare some of her deepest insecurities on "Snow White" and recalls the time she lost herself to love on "A Cautionary Tale." Fans may be surprised to hear "Clean Air," a twangy ode to the "waltzy, bluesy, early country" music that she finds "romantic," but the real shock awaits them on "Sabotage," the album's last track. Laufey's signature croon—"It's just a matter of time 'til you see the dagger / It's a special of mine, to cause disaster"—is punctured by frantic instrumentals that crescendo in the final minute of the song, ultimately tying the album up in one big, cacophonous bow. Falling in love, we learn, is not always pretty.

"I wanted to take this idea of beauty that's often around my music and throw it in the fire a little bit, just for the sake of showing the complexity of female emotion... of my emotion," she said. "I think it's my most daunting project yet."

TIME spoke with Laufey about finding creative freedom, her "long distance relationship" with Iceland, and the singer-songwriters she turns to for advice.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

When you announced this record, [you said](#), “I’ve taken my diary and turned it into an album of songs.” What made you want to get so personal?

I just had the confidence to. I also fell in love for the first time, so it’s an album about that, and the self-discovery that comes with it. The whole goal of the album is to illustrate the contrast between this glass-like beauty and chaos that I feel within myself so often; that I am needing to present myself in a very pristine way, but I’m fighting some sort of chaos on the inside because I’m not letting it out. And with this album, I really just wanted to let it all out.

I think that’s very apparent on the song “Sabotage.” The instrumentals sound like the musical version of what you just described.

“Sabotage” was the first song I wrote for the album—that’s where the album title comes from, and it’s kind of the thesis. It’s about the fight between your external and your internal. It’s about the fear of sabotaging something beautiful and of another person finding out your true nature. I had a lot of fun plugging meaning into the music without actually saying words, so with those [instrumental] disturbances, I wanted to interpret anxiety and the noise in your head that kind of blurs everything out.

What is your creative process like when it comes to making music? Do you approach storytelling differently when you’re writing lyrics versus actually playing an instrument?

I always start with writing the song. I write the full song on my own—the skeleton, the structure—and then I bring it to Spencer [Stewart, the album’s executive producer], and we kind of bring it to life together. I always have ideas of how I want the final product to sound, but it’s [at that stage] that we use musical painting to

really bring it to the next level. If I'm singing about flying up, we'll find a flute or a violin that starts to trill up. When singing about something ominous, we'll use minor chords and dissonance to really illustrate that. It's stuff like that that makes the music really cinematic.

The single “Snow White” is about the unfair beauty standards that women are often held to. “Letter to My 13 Year Old Self,” a song from your last album, is a heartfelt message of encouragement to the version of you that grew up feeling insecure. Were you thinking about the parallels between the two songs when you were working on “Snow White”?

They are definitely both songs on self-reflection, but “Letter to My 13 Year Old Self” is extremely hopeful: it’s telling young women everywhere that they will be OK and that their drawbacks may be their biggest strengths. “Snow White” is really cynical. There’s no comfort there. But it’s a song that I wrote out of frustration for not being able to reach or achieve these standards that are set for women that tour arenas or walk red carpets. Striving for perfection is a dark, endless road because the goal posts keep moving.

I think even women who aren’t in the industry can relate to that.

We all have these impossible standards thrust upon us, and we all have those moments where we feel like the way we look is way more important than how we speak or how we address people. I often felt like I couldn’t compete in the dating scene because it felt like my body and my looks were measured way higher than my brains, and it felt like the opposite for men. I thought so much about putting this song out, because I’m aware of my position as a role model, and I’m aware of my words being listened to by young women, but I realized that sometimes feeling seen or relating to someone is the best feeling.

Are there any other musicians that you reach out to when you’re wanting to feel seen?

I love dumping my problems on Norah Jones. I don’t know what it is, I think her voice is just so comforting. Claire [Cottrill, who goes by the stage name Clairo] is incredible, I love talking to her. Olivia Rodrigo, she’s just so balanced and beautiful and kind. Conan Gray, as well. Anytime I need to get anything out of my system, Conan is the first person I call.

I saw in the album credits that Clairo provided background vocals on “Mr. Eclectic.” What was it like working with her on that track?

We had the best evening splitting a bottle of wine and singing. I respect her so much as a musician, and she honestly brought so much life to the recording, not only with her beautiful voice but also with her thoughts. We were just riffing and it made the song so much better. It was a level of freedom that I really needed at that moment—I was at the point in the album-making process where I needed [someone] to release me from my overthinking.

Your song “Forget-Me-Not” is a love letter to Iceland, and you even sing a few lines in Icelandic. What does that song mean to you?

It’s about the experience of emigrating from a country, trying to balance two cultures, and the fear of losing the one you moved away from. It’s something that really plagues me all the time. Am I Icelandic enough, now that I’ve lived away from Iceland for seven years? So I wanted to write a love letter to Iceland and tell it, ‘Sorry I had to leave to go chase my dreams.’ And I wanted to hide it within a love letter because, in some ways, it sounds like I’m singing about a person. There’s something beautiful about that to me because it kind of does feel like a long distance relationship.

In an interview last year, you talked about how you wanted to find some growth with this album while still staying true to yourself and your sound. How did you go about finding that balance?

Lyrically, I really let myself be incredibly honest and not think too much about how it was going to be read or perceived by the world. I really tried to create something unique. There are songs on it where I tried to have the most classical string writing I've ever had [within] a pop song. That's something that I've done before, but I really just expanded on this album. I just really didn't think too much about what box the album was going to fit into. I've never been able to fit into one category or another, and I didn't want to be held back by fitting into one. So I kind of just let myself be free.

There does seem to be a lot of talk about how exactly to label your music, whether it's jazz or pop. Does that ever get annoying?

It's hard because I've never felt like one thing or another. I've never been Icelandic or Chinese or American. I'm always a mix of everything. I've never even been an individual—I have an identical twin sister—so I've never fit into a box. Musically, I am a jazz singer; not all my songs are jazz. I'm a classical cellist; I didn't play a lick of classical cello on this album, but I'd fight anyone who told me I wasn't a classical cellist. So I wouldn't say it's annoying, but I think it's reductive. You're describing all of me by just a portion of my character.

It doesn't seem like your fans care either way.

I honestly think there's a very small group of people who are always trying to figure it out. I hope that people are just around for the music. That was the biggest difference for this album—I didn't think about genre. I was just like, 'My genre is Laufey. This is a Laufey album.'

<https://time.com/7311403>

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