A week in the life of the world 5 JULY 2024 SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS: MATT BLEASE Join the community Twitter: @guardianweekly facebook.com/guardianweekly Instagram: @guardian\_weekly On the cover Joe Biden’s poor performance in a US televised presidential debate with Donald Trump last week set Democratic party alarm bells ringing. “ All he had to do was turn up and reassure people his marbles were all present and correct, and it would have been enough,” writes Jonathan Freedland . “The bar could scarcely have been lower. But Biden could not clear it.” Anna Moneymaker/Getty; Guardian Design 4 GL OBAL REP ORT 15 SP OTLIGHT Headlines from the last seven days United Kingdom ................... 8 Science & Environment ........ 9 The big story United States Can Joe Biden last the election course? .......10 34 FEAT URES 45 OPINION 51 CULT URE 60 LIFESTYLE In-depth reporting and analysis � France Macron’s centrist project splutters to an end ............... 15 United Kingdom The long and wasted years of Conservative rule ............ 20 Middle East How journalists have been targeted by Israel in Gaza .... 24 Europe Georgia activists vow to battle on despite violent attacks ....26 Science Lucy changed our human understanding ................... 30 United States The supreme court and the Trump immunity verdict .....32 Long reads, interviews & essays How Britain’s libraries became so much more than lenders By Aida Edemariam ............. 34 Could an Olympics-style event where everyone dopes work? By Adharanand Finn ........... 40 George Monbiot History can show us how to take on the oligarchs ........... 45 Jill Stark Being single is the key to living my best life .........................47 ▼ Margaret Simons Julian Assange changed journalism for ever ............. 48 Assange was an anarchist trying to work with an institutional media ... a force for reform, rather than revolution  TV, fi lm, music, theatre, art, architecture & more Screen Kevin Bacon, Hollywood’s great survivor ......................51 � Music Pyrotechnics and pink cowboy hats at Glastonbury 2024 ..... 54 Stage Comedians and the art of working the crowd ...............55 Books A myth-busting study of adolescence .........................57 Tim Dowling Living bleep to bleep ........... 60 Ask Ottolenghi Bring on the substitutes .......61 Recipe Courgette fritters .................61

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 4 Global report Headlines from the last seven days UNITED STATES Trump applauds ‘big win’ on presidential immunity Republicans applauded the supreme court’s decision to grant Donald Trump immunity for offi cial acts undertaken as president, as Democratic leaders expressed outrage over a ruling that legal experts warn could undermine the foundations of US democracy. The court’s six conservative justices ruled that presidents have “absolute immunity” for offi cial acts but no immunity from unoffi cial acts. The distinction could hamper the federal case against Trump over his eff orts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, and makes it even less likely that the case will go to trial before election day in November. Trump celebrated a “big win for our constitution and democracy” . Democrats condemned the decision as a disgrace, describing it as an attack on the separation of powers and a black mark on the supreme court’s reputation. The decision came after a tumultuous few days in which Joe Biden came under growing scrutiny from Democrats following a faltering performance in a televised presidential election debate with Trump. The big story Page 10 � 1 RUSSIA 2 Gershkovich appears in court on spying charges Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich appeared in an Ekaterinburg court on spying charges that he, his employer and the US government have all described as politically motivated. Gershkovich, his head shaven by prison authorities, was transferred from the Moscow jail where he has been held since March 2023. Gershkovich is the fi rst American journalist to be arrested in Russia on espionage charges since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The closed proceedings make it illegal for the press to publish any evidence or testimony that is heard in the case. Vladimir Putin has indicated he wants to trade Gershkovich for Russians serving prison sentences abroad, including an alleged FSB assassin convicted of murder in Germany. EUROPEAN UNION 4 Von der Leyen nominated for commission president Ursula von der Leyen clinched the nomination to serve a second term as president of the European Commission, despite Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni’s complaints of a “wrong” process. Estonia’s prime minister, Kaja Kallas, is set to become the EU’s top diplomat, representing the bloc on the world stage for the next fi ve years. The former Portuguese prime minister António Costa has been elected to take over as president of the European Council, putting him in charge of fi nding compromises between the 27 heads of state and government. Meloni abstained on von der Leyen’s appointment and voted against the other two. Von der Leyen must win over a majority of the European parliament’s 720 MEPs to secure her second term. They are expected to vote this month. Kallas has to be confi rmed by the commission president, a formality. She will also appear before MEPs later in the year, although they cannot reject her as the EU’s high representative for foreign aff airs. Spotlight Page 18 � UNITED STATES 3 ‘No regrets’ says Bannon as he begins prison sentence Steve Bannon turned himself in to prison on Monday after the supreme court rejected his last-minute appeal to avoid prison time for defying multiple subpoenas surrounding the House’s January 6 insurrection investigation. He live-streamed his drive to FCI Danbury, the minimum- security prison in Connecticut where he will serve his four- month sentence, on his War Room podcast and show on Rumble. “I have no regrets and I’m proud of what I did,” Bannon, a longtime ally of Donald Trump, told a gaggle of press and supporters. GREECE 5 Six-day working week brought in to boost growth Employees have been told that they can work six-day weeks in an unorthodox step aimed at turbocharging productivity. After outpacing other Europeans in terms of economic growth, the nation once at the heart of the continent’s worst fi nancial crisis has bucked the trend again, introducing a 48-hour working week. The measure, decried as “barbaric” by unions, t ook eff ect this week. The government of the prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, sa id the initiative was necessary due to a shrinking population and shortage of skilled workers . Copyright © 2024 GNM Ltd. All rights reserved Published weekly by Guardian News & Media Ltd, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London, N1 9GU, UK Printed in the UK, Denmark, the US, Australia and New Zealand ISSN 0958-9996 To advertise contact advertising. enquiries@ theguardian.com To subscribe, visit theguardian.com/ gw-subscribe Manage your subscription at subscribe. theguardian.com/ manage USA and Canada gwsubsus @theguardian.com Toll Free: +1-844-632-2010 Australia and New Zealand apac.help @theguardian.com Toll Free: 1 800 773 766 UK, Europe and Rest of World gwsubs@ theguardian.com +44 (0) 330 333 6767

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly UK headlines p8� 9 1 4 5 3 BELIZE 7 Drug gang crackdown leads to dozens of arrests A controversial state of emergency to crack down on a surge of gang- related murders and other violent crimes led to the arrest of nearly a hundred people. The order, announced last week, gives police the power to search homes without a warrant and detain suspects for up to 90 days. Originally implemented for 30 days, the government announced last Friday that it was increasing its length to maximise its eff ectiveness. The state of emergency also imposes a nightly curfew on under-18s, who are often groomed as drug mules. FRANCE 9 Le Pen’s far-right gain a historic 33% share of vote Marine Le Pen’s far-right party is in reach of becoming the biggest political force in the French parliament after a historically high showing in the fi rst round of snap parliamentary elections. The left and centrists immediately began to call for tactical voting to try to stop the far-right before next Sunday’s fi nal round runoff , after exit polls indicated the National Rally (RN) performed well. Offi cial results showed that RN and its allies received 33% of the national popular vote, with the leftwing New Popular Front in second with 28%. President Emmanuel Macron’s centrist bloc was third on 20% of the vote. Spotlight Page 15 � CANADA 8 Three-year sentence for ‘Pretendian’ mother A woman who fraudulently claimed her daughters were Inuit has been sentenced to three years in jail, in what is believed to be the first ever custodial sentence for a “Pretendian”. Karima Manji, whose daughters accessed more than C$150,000 ($109,000) in benefits intended for Inuit, was sentenced after pleading guilty to fraud in February. Nunavut justice Mia Manocchio said the case “must serve as a signal to any future Indigenous pretender that the false appropriation of Indigenous identity in a criminal context will draw a significant penalty”. In recent years, Canada has grappled with a wave of cases in which people falsely claimed Indigenous identity. CANADA 6 Electoral history made by candidate who got no votes A candidate who received zero votes in a contested federal election described himself as the “true unity candidate” after running in a federal election as part of a protest over the lack of electoral reforms in Canada. Félix-Antoine Hamel was among 84 candidates in a Toronto byelection. He put his name forward as a candidate after he was approached by the Longest Ballot Committee, which works on electoral reform advocacy after Justin Trudeau abandoned a promise to abolish country’s the fi rst-past-the-post system. The Longest Ballot Committee put 77 names on the Toronto ballot, bringing the total to 84 and slowing eff orts to count votes . Election workers were forced to sift through paper ballots measuring a metre in length: the longest ever in Canadian history. BOLIVIA 10 President ordered ‘self- coup’, arrested general says A former army chief accused of leading a failed coup attempt was given six months “preventive detention”, a prosecutor said , as the president denied the attack was a “self-coup” designed to boost his flagging popularity. General Juan José Zúñiga Macías faces charges of terrorism and armed uprising, state prosecutor Cesar Siles said. Zúñiga said he was following an order from the president, Luis Arce (above), following last Wednesday’s fleeting insurrection in La Paz. In the moments before he was detained, the ex-army chief claimed: “The president told me the situation was fucked and that he needed something to boost his popularity.”

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 D R CONGO 12 Rebel militia seize key town in volatile eastern region Rwandan-backed M23 rebels seized a strategic town in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s volatile east, a local offi cial said. Kanyabayonga lies on the northern front of the confl ict in North Kivu province, which has been rocked by violence since 2021 when the M23 (March 23 Movement) resumed its armed campaign in the region. Kanyabayonga is home to more than 60,000 people, as well as tens of thousands who have fl ed there , driven from their homes by the advance of the rebels. “They no longer have anywhere to go, it is total desolation, the population is tired,” an administrative offi cial said. D R CONGO 14 Warnings over lethal strain of mpox as children die A dangerous strain of mpox that is killing children and causing miscarriages is the most transmissible yet and could spread internationally, scientists warn . The virus appears to be spreading via both sexual and non-sexual contact, in places ranging from brothels to schools. Hundreds of people with the disease, formerly known as monkeypox, have attended hospital in the mining town of Kamituga, South Kivu province, in what is likely to be the “tip of the iceberg” of a larger outbreak, doctors say. Mpox is from the same family as smallpox, and causes fl u-like symptoms and pus-fi lled lesions. IRAN 13 Presidential election heads to runoﬀ amid low turnout A runoff election will be held on 5 July after the reformist lawmaker Masoud Pezeshkian secured a narrow lead over the hardline former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili but failed to secure more than 50% of the votes. Turnout may end up at a record low of 40% . Initial results showed Pezeshkian received 10.45m votes, Jalili 9.47m and the other leading conservative Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf 3.38m. A fourth candidate, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, won only 206,000 . Pezeshkian and Jalili will contest the runoff . MAURITANIA 11 Ghazouani re-elected as president with 56% of vote Mohamed Ould Ghazouani won the presidential election, according to provisional results from more than 99.27% of polling stations released by the electoral commission last Sunday. Ghazouani was re-elected with more than 56% of the vote, the country’s independent electoral commission website showed. The 67-year-old former army chief of staff and defence minister, who was fi rst elected in 2019, has pledged to boost investment to spur a commodities boom as the country prepares to start producing natural gas . 17 18 16 14 20 19

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 7 Global report The big story p10 � ISRAEL /PALESTINE 15 Freed Gaza hospital head accuses Israel of torture The head of Gaza ’s biggest hospital has accused Israel of subjecting him and other detainees to “almost daily torture”, following his release after seven months of detention . Mohammed Abu Salmiya, the director of al-Shifa hospital , was among dozens of Palestinians freed and returned to Gaza on Monday, according to Israeli authorities. Mistreatment included assaults with batons and dogs and deprivation of food and medicine , Abu Salmiya said. Other released detainees also alleged abuse. The claims could not be independently confi rmed . There was no immediate response from the Israeli prison service, which has previously denied similar accusations . Spotlight Page 24 � HONG KONG 16 Tycoon’s son urges foreign judges to reassess staying The son of detained Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai urged foreign judges to carefully consider whether they should continue to serve in judicial roles “in this place that imprisons pro- democracy protesters”. Speaking during a visit to Australia, Sebastien Lai said Hong Kong “has more than 1,800 political prisoners and these political prisoners are there for their pro-democracy protesting”. He noted that two UK judges and a Canadian judge recently resigned from Hong Kong’s courts. Those who chose to leave were “voting with their feet”, he said. CHINA 18 Two ex-defence ministers expelled for corruption The Chinese Communist party expelled two former defence ministers for corruption, including Li Shangfu, who disappeared from public view along with other senior fi gures last year. Li was sacked in October, two months after he disappeared from public life . Chinese state media said Li and Wei Fenghe, another former defence minister, had been expelled from the CCP for “serious violation of party discipline and the law”. The accusations against the two men include accepting gifts and money and facilitating improper benefi ts for others . CHINA 20 Tech ﬁ rms vow hate speech crackdown after attack Internet companies have announced a crackdown on “extreme nationalism” online, particularly anti-Japanese sentiment, after a Chinese woman was fatally stabbed while protecting a Japanese mother and child in Suzhou. Tencent and NetEase, two of the biggest fi rms, said they would be investigating and banning users who stirred up hatred. An unemployed man, surnamed Zhou, was arrested last week for stabbing the mother and child in the eastern China city. Hu Youping, who intervened in the attack, died from her injuries . NEW ZEAL AND 19 Feral cat killing contest produces record haul A controversial competition that allows children to hunt feral cats in rural areas for cash prizes has produced its biggest haul yet, with roughly 340 animals killed . The annual North Canterbury fundraising event, which wrapped up last weekend, is open to children and adult participants and targets deer, pigs, ducks, possums and rabbits. In 2023, it introduced feral cats to its categories, prompting furious backlash from animal rights activists. Event organiser Matt Bailey said the category was created to help manage feral cats, which threaten native wildlife and carry diseases that put farmers’ livestock at risk. A NZ$500 ($300) prize is awarded to the hunter with the largest number of cats killed, while the largest cat caught nets $1,000. NORTH KOREA 17 US and allies’ joint exercise prickles Pyongyang Pyongyang criticised a joint military exercise by South Korea, Japan and the US held last month, state media said, saying such drills show the relationship among the three countries has developed into “the Asian version of Nato”. Last week, the three countries began the large-scale joint military drills called “Freedom Edge”, involving navy destroyers, fi ghter jets and the nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, amid tensions on the Korean peninsula stemming from North Korea’s weapons testing. North Korea’s foreign ministry said Pyongyang would not ignore the strengthening of a military bloc led by the US and its allies and would protect regional peace with an aggressive and overwhelming response . It also said Washington was continuing its eff ort to link up South Korea and Japan to Nato . South Korea said it would review the possibility of supplying arms directly to Ukraine, in protest against a recent mutual defence pact signed between the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, and the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. DEATHS Ismail Kadare Acclaimed Albanian author of The General of the Dead Army . He died on 1 July, aged 88. Kinky Friedman US country singer known as the “Jewish cowboy”, who was a close friend of Bob Dylan and ran for Texas governor. He died on 27 June, aged 79. Frank Duckworth British statistician who was co-deviser with Tony Lewis of the Duckworth- Lewis method for calculating target scores in limited- overs cricket matches abridged by bad weather. He died on 21 June, aged 84. Howard Bernstein British public servant who spearheaded the regeneration of post-industrial Manchester as the city council’s chief executive. He died on 22 June, aged 71. Rajavarothiam Sampanthan Sri Lankan politician who was a veteran campaigner for the country’s Tamil minority. He died on 30 June, aged 91.

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 8 Global report United Kingdom MIGRATION Tory criticises Banksy work at Glastonbury James Cleverly condemned a Banksy artwork of an infl atable boat holding dummies of migrants at the Glastonbury music festival as a “celebration of loss of life”. Cleverly, the Conservative home secretary leading into this week’s election, claimed it was a misplaced attempt at humour . The artist was confi rmed to be behind the mock migrant boat being released into the crowd during a set by the Bristol punk band Idles. It was crowd-surfed above the audience during a song that began with the lyrics: “My blood brother is an immigrant / A beautiful immigrant.” Culture Page 54 � SOCIETY Actors become ﬁ rst two female Garrick members The Garrick Club named Judi Dench and Siân Phillips as distinguished members, making them the fi rst women to be allowed to join the club in its 193- year history. The actors were given fast-tracked membership during the club’s annual general meeting on Monday . Until now, no woman had been allowed into the Garrick unless invited in and accompanied around the building by a man. The announcement of the two names at the start of the meeting prompted some applause from Garrick members. About 60% of members of the central London institution voted in May to admit women, reversing several earlier votes that had blocked proposals to reform the club’s rules. L GBTQ+ RIGHTS London Pride draws 32,000-strong crowd Crowds gathered in London as part of the capital’s annual Pride celebrations . The mayor, Sadiq Khan, was at the front of the march alongside his wife, Saadiya, as well as Andrew Boff, a Conservative London assembly member, and Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, an air quality campaigner. An estimated 500 groups and businesses took part, comprising more than 32,000 people. FOOD SAFETY Supermarkets face legal action after E coli outbreak Tesco and Asda are being sued by customers, including the family of an 11-year-old girl, who were left seriously ill after eating own-brand sandwiches linked to an outbreak of E coli. The supermarkets face legal action after a child and adult were left in hospital. At least one person has been confirmed to have died and more than 120 others have been hospitalised due to Shiga toxin- producing E coli (Stec). Several food manufacturers recalled sandwiches, wraps and salads sold in big supermarkets and retail chains over fears that they are linked to the outbreak. The Food Standards Agency has previously said lettuce used in the products was thought to be the likely source of the outbreak. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said in a briefing last week that two people in England died within 28 days of infection with the bacteria. Both individuals, who died in May, had underlying medical conditions. George Monbiot p45� ELECTION 2024 Starmer vows ‘deeds, not words’ ahead of vote Keir Starmer said a new Labour government would have to stave off a rise of the populist right by urgently restoring faith in British politics through “deeds, not words” and making a material diff erence to people’s lives. As the election campaign entered its fi nal days this week ahead of the 4 July vote – after the Weekly went to press – the Labour leader said that while “hope has been kicked out” of people, his plans for economic growth across the country, the NHS and the transition to renewables could help bring it back. He vowed to bring an end to “divisive and toxic” culture wars if he ma de it to No 10 and hold his ministers to high standards . But Starmer warned that a failure to address the disillusionment with British politics could result in a rise of the hard right as witnessed in France and elsewhere. With polls showing the Conservatives lagging 20 point s behind Labour leading into election day , the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, warned that Labour would use a landslide victory to shift politics to the left and stay in power for decades . Sunak insisted he was proud of the campaign his party had run. But there were already signs his party was preparing for a leadership election to come. Kemi Badenoch, the business secretary, declined to rule out a leadership bid in an interview with the Times last weekend. The Times revealed that leadership websites for several senior Tories, including Badenoch, had been either set up or updated in recent weeks. Spotlight Page 20 � 120k Price in pounds ($150,000) fetched at an auction in Wiltshire for a pair of blue suede shoes worn by Elvis Presley during the early part of his career . Presley gave the size 10.5 shoes to a friend after he was called up to join the US army

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 9 S C I E NC E A N D E N V I RON M E N T world’s most threatened species, according to analysis published in the journal Frontiers in Science. The research team identifi ed 16,825 sites that should be prioritised for conservation in the next fi ve years to prevent imminent extinctions of animals and plants found nowhere else. Of the sites identifi ed, which the study’s authors called “conservation imperatives”, 38% are within 2.5km of an existing protected area . The Philippines, Brazil, Indonesia, Madagascar and Colombia were together home to more than half of the sites. N E A N DE RT H A L S Neanderthal child had Down’s syndrome, fossil reveals A Neanderthal child with Down’s syndrome survived until at least the age of six, according to a study in the journal Science Advances. Recent examination of a human fossil unearthed in 1989 at the Cova Negra archaeological site in Valencia found traits in the inner-ear anatomy that indicated Down’s syndrome . “The pathology which this individual suff ered resulted in highly disabling symptoms, including, at the very least, Do you have a recently taken picture you’d like to share with Guardian Weekly? Scan the QR code or visit theguardian.com/ pictures-guardian-weekly and we’ll print your best submissions 6m The number of antelope observed migrating in South Sudan, the largest migration of land mammals on Earth, and more than double the size of the annual “great migration” of wildebeest, zebra and gazelle between Tanzania and Kenya � Reader’s eyewitness Fits the bill ‘A lone puffi n peeks out of the shadow of a cave at Flamborough Cliff s nature reserve, on the Yorkshire coast.’ By Allan Charter, Scarborough, England, UK complete deafness, severe vertigo attacks and an inability to maintain balance,” said Mercedes Conde- Valverde, a palaeoanthropologist at the University of Alcalá and lead author of the study. The fi ndings hint at compassionate caregiving among the extinct human species. C L I M AT E C R I SI S Sharp rise in climate lawsuits f iled against companies The number of climate lawsuits fi led against companies around the world is rising swiftly, a report has found, and a majority of cases that have concluded have been successful. About 230 climate-aligned lawsuits have been fi led against corporations and trade associations since 2015, according to the analysis published by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. The US accounted for the majority of litigation cases fi led in 2023, with 129 cases. Climate litigation cases were fi led for the fi rst time in Panama and Portugal in 2023. This means 55 countries have recorded climate cases, with a growing number arising in the global south, which accounts for 8% of all cases. H E A LT H Multivitamins do not help people live longer, study ﬁ nds Taking a daily multivitamin does not help people to live any longer and may increase the risk of an early death, a major study found . Erikka Loftfi eld and colleagues at the National Cancer Institute in Maryland analysed data from three major studies , all launched in the 1990s , covering 390,124 adults . The researchers reported a 4% higher mortality risk in the initial years of follow-up. The greater risk of death may refl ect the harms multivitamins can cause or a trend for people to start daily multivitamins when they develop a serious illness. Details were published in Jama Network. C ON SE RVAT ION Protecting 1.2% of land could save thousands of species Protecting just 1.2% of the Earth’s surface for nature would be enough to prevent the extinction of the

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 11 U N I T E D S TAT E S By Robert Tait WASHINGTON A mid a howling chorus of derision over Joe Biden’s substandard debate performance against Donald Trump last week, one voice seemed to resonate more powerfully than others. At 6.15pm last Friday – roughly 19 hours after the two presidential candi- dates left the stage in Atlanta the previ- ous evening – the verdict of the New York Times’s editorial board dropped online to the newspaper’s subscribers. The judgment was devastating. The US president, the board force- fully argued, had presented such an alarming spectacle of aged frailty that the best thing he could now do for the country he had served for more than half a century was to withdraw from the race and allow his Democratic party to choose another candidate. The newspaper long venerated as “the old Grey Lady” of American journalism pointed out that Biden had presented himself as the fi gure best positioned to defeat the threat television less infl uential. Biden’s response to the editorial – if he has even seen it – is unknown. Yet the article echoed equally eviscerating critiques from other weighty and normally friendly sources – some of them so respected by the president that their views cannot have failed to wound. Similarly pleading with Biden to stand down were his favourite columnist, Tom Friedman – also of the New York Times – who wrote that he had wept as he watched the debate from Lisbon. Joe Scarborough, host of MSNBC’s Morning Joe – a programme the president is known to revere – had an identical message, all the while saying that he “loved” Biden and calling his presidency “an unqualifi ed success”. The highly respected, and liberal, website the Atlantic published six articles last Friday, all arguing for an end to the Biden candidacy. The media cacophony refl ected shock with the persona that Biden, 81, presented in the debate. Rather than allay nagging voter concerns that he was too old to run – his campaign’s goal when it pressed for the event – he seemed to confi rm them with his octogenarian mien . He looked infi rm and sometimes stuck for words, in contrast to Trump, who – although � Joe Biden during last week’s CNN televised debate against Donald Trump ARTEM PRIAKHIN/ SOPA IMAGES/REX/ SHUTTERSTOCK � to democracy represented by Trump – and acknowledged that he had suc- cessfully done so in 2020. “But the greatest public service Mr Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re- election,” it intoned. “As it stands, the president is engaged in a reckless gamble . There are Democratic leaders better equipped to present clear, compelling and ener- getic alternatives to a second Trump presidency … It’s too big a bet to simply hope Americans will overlook or dis- count Mr Biden’s age and infi rmity that they see with their own eyes.” The judgment evoked memories of February 1968, when Walter Cronkite , the magisterial CBS anchor, used his television platform to openly ques- tion the US military commitment in Vietnam after the Vietcong launched an off ensive that led to guerrillas storming the US embassy compound in Saigon. Watching, President Lyndon Johnson – another Democratic presi- dent, to whom Biden is sometimes compared – reportedly said: “If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost Middle Amer- ica.” Just over a month later, Johnson withdrew from that year’s presidential election . Times have changed since 1968; media has become more fragmented, with newspapers and, arguably, ‘We were all a bit nervous about the debate, but no one thought it was going to be as bad as it was’

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 12 just three years younger – presented a picture of fl uent, if mendacious, loquacity. Biden came out swinging last Friday, appearing much more upbeat at an election rally in North Carolina, admitting that “I don’t debate as well as I used to” but telling a cheering crowd: “I know how to tell the truth … I know how to do this job. I know – like millions of Americans know – when you get knocked down, you get back up.” Messages of public support poured in from Democratic luminar- ies including Barack Obama , Bill and Hillary Clinton , vice-president Kamala Harris and Gavin Newsom, the gover- nor of California. Yet the defi antly positive messaging is unlikely to soothe fears that reach into the upper echelons of the Democratic party and even into the White House itself. The big story US election ▲ Joe Biden and his family step off Air Force One MANDEL NGAN/AFP ▼ Biden speaking in North Carolina STAN GILLILAND/EPA Several offi cials in the presidential West Wing were so demoralised by last Thursday’s debate that they opted to work from home the following day, Politico reported , expressing their fears on text threads. “We were all a bit nervous about the debate, but no one thought it was going to be as bad as it was,” one West Wing staff er was quoted as saying. “The vibes are really bad. People feel demoralised.” The acid test may be whether demoralisation extends to Democratic donors – a sensitive area, given that Trump has recently overtaken Biden in campaign fundraising after lagging for months. The early signs are hardly encouraging. The debate triggered waves of panic among Democratic mega-donors in Silicon Valley. One tech-industry donor who had planned to host Biden in a fundraiser report- edly cancelled the event because of the debate, while some have emailed and texted each other about how to persuade Jill Biden, the fi rst lady, into talking her husband out of the running. The Biden s appeared to close ranks last weekend, with US media reports suggesting that a Camp David fam- ily gathering – which included the president’s wife, children and grand- children – resulted in the group telling him he could still show Americans he is capable of serving another term . But there was undeniable anxiety among Democrat and independent voters in swing states in the wake of last week’s debate, with some saying they were increasingly disappointed and alarmed by the choice before them in November. Ron Ringlund is the president of a machine shop in southern Wisconsin. At 71 years old, he knows what it’s like to keep working after many have retired and had shrugged off concerns about Biden’s age – until last week. “I was thinking, ‘Well, it’s just the Republicans are putting that out there to make him look bad,’ you know – but he looked bad ,” said Ringlund, who said he usually votes for Demo- crats, and views Trump as a threat to democracy. “Wisconsin’s neck and neck right now, and just one thing can make the diff erence. And I think last night could have been the diff erence, and it scares me.” Ringlund said he was open to the idea of someone else stepping in for Biden, but wasn’t sure who would have the national name recognition. “I’m not sure that it would work, but it might be the only chance,” he said. Sam Hutcheson, an engineer in the Atlanta suburb of Tucker, said Trump was still far worse than Biden, but he was afraid that swing voters would see what happened in the debate and stay home, vote for a third-party candidate or vote for Trump out of spite. “I like Joe Biden as a person,” Hutcheson said. “He’s the most decent [person] to be in the offi ce since probably Jimmy Carter. But he’s an 80-year-old man and he did what 80-year-old men do.” He added: “It’s not ageist to state the truth .” Observer ROBERT TAIT IS A JOURNALIST BASED IN WASHINGTON DC Alice Herman and George Chidi also contributed to this report ‘He’s an 80-year- old man and he did what 80-year- old men do’ � Trump and Biden at the first debate KYLE MAZZA/SOPA IMAGES/REX

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 13 J B Pritzker The 59-year-old governor of Illinois would be one of the wealthiest of possible picks. He can fl ourish his credentials of having codifi ed the right to abortion in Illinois and declaring it a “sanctuary state” for women seeking abortions. He has also been strong on gun control, and legalised recreational marijuana. Gretchen Whitmer The Michigan governor, 52, was on the shortlist for VP pick for Biden in 2020, and a strong showing in the midterms for the Democratic party was in part attributed to her govern orship. She has been in favour of stricter gun laws, repealing abortion bans and backing universal pre school. E X P L A I N E R By Martin Belam In the wingsSix candidates who could replace Biden Kamala Harris The most obvious pick would be Biden’s vice- president. She has been widely criticised for not carving out her own role in the Biden administration and has poor polling approval ratings, sugg esting she would strugg le against Donald Trump in the glare of an election campaign. The 59-year-old was backing Biden after the debate, but may be the easiest for the party to install as a replacement. If Biden should choose to resign now, Harris would automatically become president. become pres Gavin Newsom The California governor, 56, was in the spin room last Thursday night talking down any alternatives to Biden as nominee, saying it was “nonsensical speculation”. He had a primetime debate last year with the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, which could be a presidential match-up of the future, and has made a point of supporting Democrats in elections away from his home state, which looked, at times, like a shadow White House campaign. Dean Phillips A candidate during the Democratic primaries earlier this year, the 55-year-old picked some backers but failed to appeal to the broader party, winning no contests, and so is unlikely to be a factor if Biden steps down. MARTIN BELAM IS A LIVE BLOGGER FOR THE GUARDIAN Joe Biden won the Democratic primaries earlier this year but does not offi cially become the party’s candidate for president until endorsed at the 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which takes place from 19-22 August. There is no formal mechanism to replace him as the presumptive nominee ; such a move would be the fi rst time a US political party has attempted to do so in modern Were Biden to step aside , he may try to name someone – most likely his vice- president, Kamala Harris – as his preferred candidate . The most drastic course of action open to Biden – resigning the presidency – would make Harris president. But that would not automatically make her the Democratic nominee for 2024. If a candidate were to be chosen at the Chicago convention that would make what is conventionally a highly choreographed event, where a party presents its nominee to the public over several days, into a much more volatile open, or contested, convention – a rarity in modern US politics. About 700 party insiders, who may not be united, would have the choice of picking a new candidate. They would then have only three months to unite behind and campaign for them before the November election. times. The only option would be for Biden to agree to step aside and allow the delegates he won in the primaries – who vote to nominate a candidate at the Chicago convention – to choose someone else. There is no legal requirement for delegates to vote for the person who won in the primaries, but they are asked to vote in a way that “in all good conscience refl ects the sentiments of those who elected them”. universal pre schoo h se ris lly his home state, which looked, at times, like a shadow White h sident. sident. like a shadow White House campaign. be a factor if Biden steps down. Sherrod Brown The 71-year-old would be the oldest of the alternate picks, but is still seven years younger than Trump. It was considered a surprise when he did not have a tilt for the Democratic nomination for 2020, at the time saying remaining as Ohio’s senator was “the best place for me to make that fi ght” on behalf of working people. A strong voice on labour rights , he has also defend ed IVF and abortion.

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 14 The big story US election � Donald Trump hopes to return to the White House in the face of a weak opponent ANNA MONEYMAKER/ GETTY hat was the worst moment? Perhaps when one especially rambling sentence of Joe Biden’s ended in a mumbled, confused declaration that “ We fi nally beat Medicare ”, as if he were the enemy of the very public service Democrats cherish and defend. Maybe it was when the president was not talking, but the camera showed him staring vacantly into space ? Or was it when he was talking, and out came a reedy whisper of a voice, one that could not command the viewer’s attention, even when the words themselves made sense? For anyone who cares about the future of the United States and therefore the future of the world, it was agonising to watch. You found yourself glancing ever more frequently at the clock, desperate for it to end, if only on humanitarian grounds: it seemed cruel to put a man of visible frailty through such an ordeal. In that sense, the fi rst – and, given what happened, probably last – TV debate between the current and former president confi rmed the worst fears many Biden supporters have long harboured over his capacity to take on and defeat Donald Trump. For more than 90 excruciating minutes, every gag about Biden’s age became real. There was no spinning it, despite White House eff orts to blame a cold. Joe Biden delivered the worst presidential debate performance ever. Expectations were rock bottom: all he had to do was C OM M E N TA RY By Jonathan Freedland turn up and show some vigour, reassure people that his marbles were all present and correct, and it would have been enough. The bar could scarcely have been lower. But Joe Biden could not clear it. And if the debate confi rmed Biden’s limitations, it also served as a reminder of why those limitations matter. For one thing, Trump’s entire framing of this race is strong v weak: he off ers himself as a strongman, against an opponent too feeble to lead the US . Purely at the physical level of what people could see and hear on their TV screens, the Atlanta debate reinforced Trump’s frame. But, no less important, Biden’s inability to deliver clear, intelligible statements meant Trump’s lies went unchallenged. There were so many . Trump claimed Democrats favoured abortion at nine months, even if that meant killing babies after birth. He claimed the real culprit for the January 6 storming of Capitol Hill was not him, but Democratic former House speaker Nancy Pelosi . There were dozens more in that vein, but because CNN had decided to have the hosts do nothing but read out scripted questions – never challenging any statement made by the candidates – it was left to Biden to hit back in real time. And he couldn’t do it. The post-match fact checkers stayed up into the early hours, attempting to set the record straight. But by then it was too late. In that sense, the debate was the 2024 campaign in microcosm. Trump is a liar, convicted felon and would-be dictator who plotted to overturn a free and fair election so he could cling to power, but he is set to return to the Oval Offi ce because his opponent is too weak to stop him . The expectation must now be that, if he faces Biden on 5 November , Trump will win. Last Thursday night’s head-to-head was supposed to be a reset. Indeed, that is why the White House opted to have the debate so unusually early: to allay fears about the president’s age and to reframe the race not as a referendum on Biden, but as a choice. That gambit doubly failed . So what now? Unfortunately, there is no US equivalent of Westminster’s short, sharp defenestrations. Some imagine the likes of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama having a word, but Biden is a proud man who feels he was passed over too long, including by those two . But ultimately this will have to be his decision. Some say the only person who could ever persuade him to give it up is his wife, Jill. Even those Democrats who concede last Thursday was a calamity worry that a change now is fraught with risk. Biden could make way for his vice -president, but Kamala Harris is even less popular than he is – and Trump would relish mining the rich seams of sexism and racism that would open up. The party could throw it open to a contest fought out at its convention in August, but that could be messy, bitter and rushed . One thing Democrats agree on: Joe Biden is a good and decent man who has been an unexpectedly consequential president . But communicating is a key part of governing, and Biden has all but lost that ability. For the past year or so, Democrats have hoped the evidence taking shape before their eyes might fade, not least because any other course of action entailed great risk. After this disaster of a debate, they can no longer deny that inaction, too, is a risk – and, given the perils of a second Trump presidency, surely the much graver one. JONATHAN FREEDLAND IS A GUARDIAN COLUMNIST Even those Democrats who concede the debate was a calamity worry that a change now is fraught with risk Biden’s burden President needs to give way to someone who can beat Trump Trump and the supreme court immunity case ruling Page 32 �

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 16 Spotlight Instead, Marine Le Pen’s far- right, anti-immigration RN , which for decades was regarded as a danger to democracy that promoted racist, antisemitic and anti-Muslim views and had to be kept out of mainstream politics at all costs, confi rmed its steady rise in parliament. The RN took about one -third of the national vote, meaning that whether or not it gains an absolute majority to form a government, it is now on track to become the dominant force and biggest party in the French parliament. Its nationwide vote share – combined with its allies from Éric Ciotti’s Les Républicains – exceeded even the resounding score of Macron’s centrists in the parliament elections of 2017. The RN’s strong showing went far beyond its traditional heartlands in the north -east and on the Mediterranean coast, spreading across the country, notably in the south -west, the west and centre. The left alliance, in second place, is fi ghting to increase its seats but appears unable to reach an absolute majority in parliament. The centrists, lagging behind in third , are likely to lose more than 100 seats. The backdrop to this political earthquake is a country that is increasingly divided. Demonstrators on the left have taken to the streets in big cities to protest against the far right and warn of the dangers of discrimination. RN voters said they chose the far right because they couldn’t make ends meet, pay their petrol bills or get a doctor’s appointment in rural areas. They celebrated Le Pen’s progress and said they felt hope and wanted change. Bargaining over tactical voting in the second round will defi ne the fi nal outcome next Sunday. Historically, parties on the left or centre-right have done deals to stand back in order to avoid splitting the vote against the far right. But this is less than certain now. The left, whose supporters voted for Macron to keep back Le Pen in two presidential elections, expressed anger that many centrists now placed its left alliance on a par with the far right and would not clearly back them. France is facing several possible govern anyway by striking deals or bringing over lawmakers from the right. The impact of the RN’s anti- immigration project on France would be signifi cant. It seeks to scrap nationality rights for children born and raised in France by foreign parents, and bar dual nationals from strategic jobs . If it forms a government, it would have the fi nal say on budgets for military support for Ukraine. But its ultimate aim is to lay the ground for Le Pen to win the presidency in 2027 in order to implement its full programme to limit immigration, give French citizens priority over non-nationals for jobs, social welfare assistance and housing and clamp down on what it called “Islamist ideologies” including the wearing of the headscarf. Macronism – a centrist force built around one man, who in 2017 promised to revolutionise politics with pragmatist cherry picking from left and right, only to veer right after his reelection in 2022 – is now waning. The pro- European centrist bloc in France still exists, but it will be far smaller and weaker from now on. It will seek to reorganise itself after this earthquake, but quite how it will do so is uncertain. ANGELIQUE CHRISAFIS IS THE GUARDIAN’S PARIS CORRESPONDENT ▲ A rally against the far right after the announcement of the first round results PAOLONI JEREMY/ABACA/ REX/SHUTTERSTOCK � Emmanuel and Brigitte Macron LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP Europe scenarios. The fi rst, which most pollsters suggested was likely, would see the RN win a majority of seats, becoming the biggest party in parliament, but falling short of the absolute majority of 289 needed to form a government. It would be the dominant force, with Macron as president, but there could be deadlock. Another scenario, which is seen as diffi cult for the RN to pull off but not impossible, is that it wins an absolute majority and forms a government with the young party president, Jordan Bardella , as prime minister. It would be the fi rst time in French history that a far-right party wins a parliamentary election and forms a government. Macron would have to share power. A third scenario would be somewhere in the middle, with the RN falling short of an absolute majority but fi nding a way to The RN is now on track to become the dominant force and biggest party in France

17 F rance’s left and centrist parties are scrambling to cobble together a united front . Rival parties were engaged in frantic bargaining and tactical voting plans on Monday in an attempt to stop the rise of Marine Le Pen’s National Rally’s (RN) . In the past, the traditional right and leftwing parties have struck agree- ments to stand down candidates from the runoff s to avoid splitting the vote against the RN. But the tactical voting strategy known as the “republican front” is less certain than ever. Leaders of President Emmanuel Macron’s centrist alliance and the New Popular Front alliance (NFP) indicated they would withdraw their own candi- dates in districts where another candi- date was better placed to beat the RN . In a written statement, Macron called on voters to rally behind can- didates who are “clearly republican and democratic”, which, based on his recent declarations, would exclude candidates from the RN and from the France Unbowed (LFI) party of Jean- Luc Mélenchon , which is a key member of the NFP alliance. But the left said Macron’s position, and that of his cen- trists, had to be made more clear. The prime minister, Gabriel Attal , who is likely to be forced to resign , warned the far right was at the “gates of power” and said the RN should not get a “single vote” in the second round. In an interview on Monday, Bruno Le Maire , a Macron ally and fi nance minister, ruled out urging voters to choose an LFI candidate. “ France Unbowed is a danger for the nation, Bardella has said he will only become prime minister if his party wins an absolute majority. He has ruled out trying to form a minority govern- ment and neither Macron nor the NFP group will form an alliance with him. “I will be a ‘cohabitation’ prime minister,” he said, referring to the fact that Macron would remain presi- dent. He said he would be “respectful of the constitution and of the offi ce of president of the republic, but uncompromising about the policies we will implement ”. Some called for a committed, unequi vocal and non-partisan response to the “catastrophe” of an RN govern- ment. Raphaël Glucksmann , who headed the Socialist party’s candidates in the European elections last month, called for all the candidates who fi n- ished third on Sunday to withdraw . “Are we ready to hand over our country – the country of Victor Hugo, of Voltaire, of Rabelais – to the Le Pen family? ” he asked. “ It’s become a referendum and that’s why we’re asking all the third- place candidates to withdraw , and why we’re asking people to vote, unam- biguously and unhesitatingly, for democratic republicans ... in order to stop the National Rally. We have ... to avoid a catastrophe the likes of which France has never known in its history.” SAM JONES IS MADRID CORRESPONDENT FOR THE GUARDIAN Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report F R A NC E Last dance Rival parties scramble to unite against the far right By Angelique Chrisafi s PARIS and Sam Jones just as the National Rally is a danger for the Republic,” he told France Inter radio. But Marine Tondelier , a senior member of the Greens , told the same radio station she was “absolutely fl oored” by Le Maire’s stance, calling it “cowardly and privileged”. The LFI’s Éric Coquerel accused the centrists of playing into Le Pen’s hands, saying “all those who continue in the former majority to put a line of equality between the LFI and the RN affi rm that for them, giving the RN a majority isn’t a problem”. Jordan Bardella , the RN president who is Le Pen’s protege, published a letter on Monday in which he attacked the LFI and said his party would mobilise voters in the second round by focusing on spending power and helping people make ends meet. Most of the letter was given over to what Bardella calls the dangers of the LFI’s Mélenchon. Mélenchon is a divisive personality in France, but other key fi gures on the left said on Monday morning that he should not be the focus of the fi nal round as he is not a candidate for prime minister. Bardella, who will be prime minister if the RN wins an absolute majority on Sunday, said the left were “agents of chaos” who posed an “existential threat to the French nation”. He said the RN would, in contrast, bring “order to the streets” and to the public purse, and would address the cost of living crisis as well as concerns over security, health, education and immigration. ▼ Members of the French parliament gather at the National Assembly on Monday. The MPs are from the far- left opposition party LFI , and from the alliance of left-wing parties, the NFP SARAH MEYSSONNIER/ REUTERS

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 18 Spotlight Europe F or months, it was rumoured that Hungary planned to use a reworked version of Donald Trump’s slogan for its upcom- ing EU presidency: Make Europe Great Again. That idea “sounded so lame and ridiculous that we refrained from reporting it ”, Szabolcs Panyi , one of Hungary’s leading investigative jour- nalists, wrote on X last month. “We were wrong.” On Monday , under that Trumpian banner, Hungary took on the six- month rotating presidency of the EU council of ministers. As well as a spell in the diplomatic limelight, Viktor Orbán’s government will be setting the EU agenda for the rest of the year. EU diplomats are downbeat, but resigned to Hungary’s six months in charge. Since Orbán returned to power in 2010, going on to win four consecu- tive terms, democratic values , the rule of law and press freedom in Hungary have withered, according to numerous independent bodies. The Hungarian government, a long-term spoiler of EU decisions, has become an even more diffi cult part- ner since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine . “I think [the Hungarian presidency] is a fi asco for the European Union,” said the French Green MEP Gwendoline Delbos-Corfi eld , who is standing down from the European parliament after fi ve years as its lead on Hungary and the rule of law . EU insiders have fumed as Hungary blocked €6.6bn ( $7.1bn) of military aid for Ukraine via the European Peace Facility fund . Orbán has also held up – although he later relented – on advanc- ing Ukraine’s EU accession talks, and secured opt-outs and weakened ver- sions of EU sanctions against Russia. Privately, diplomats have spoken of attempted blackmail, as the Orbán government seeks to unlock EU money denied to Budapest. On the eve of the presidency, €19bn in various EU funds for Hungary remain frozen by the European Commission over alleged breaches of EU law on equal rights ( including the anti-LGBT Q+ law ), the right to asylum and concerns about corruption and judicial independence. To prevent a diplomatic derailment, EU offi cials have explored how to insulate the EU from Hungarian vetoes. One paper fl oats greater use of “bridge” clauses in the EU treaty to transform policies requiring una- nimity into those needing a simple weighted majority. A senior EU diplomat said the presi dency was “perhaps a good way of reining them in” , adding that it would have been a mistake to deny Hungary its six months in charge “because then it gives them the impression that every body is against them and they need to fi ght”. The Hungarian presidency logo is a Rubik’s Cube , intended to symbolise Hungarian ingenuity and European unity. Using the Hungarian design professor Ernő Rubik ’s invention was “cute”, said Kim Lane Schep- pele , a professor in law and politics at Princeton University. But together with Trump’s slogan it reveals the dual nature of Hungary’s EU presidency, she said . “Here’s the Hungarian con- tribution to unity and here’s how we’re going to get in your face.” On the eve of Hungary’s presidency, Orbán announced he had joined forces with Austria’s far-right party and the populist Czech ANO party, launching a new European alliance. The aim was to create the strongest right wing bloc in the European parliament, Orbán said, though the trio needs to attract politicians from at least four more EU countries to successfully form a group. Diplomats suggest Orbán can do little damage because his presidency coincides with an interregnum in EU aff airs: the next European Commis- sion – the initiator and enforcer of EU law – will not take offi ce until 1 Novem- ber. Scheppele is not convinced. “Orbán has previously used two pauses in EU vigilance to consolidate autocracy. He used his rotating presi- dency in 2011 to bring into eff ect his new autocratic constitution and many accompanying laws specifying the details about the new constitutional system,” she said. Hungary’s sovereignty protection offi ce was a “very Puti n-inspired struc- ture ”, said Delbos-Corfi eld, drawing a comparison with Vladimir Putin’s 2012 foreign agents law used to repress civil society in Russia. Refl ecting on the latest decision to go after the Hungarian branch of Transparency International and the independent media outlet Átlátszó, two organisations dedicated to hold- ing the Orbán government to account, Scheppele said: “That’s why I dread the current period when Orbán’s term in the rotating presidency coincides with the interregnum. My guess is that we see all kinds of new repres- sions carried out in Hungary during this period.” JENNIFER RANKIN IS A GUARDIAN BRUSSELS CORRESPONDENT � Viktor Orbán at an informal EU summit in June HOLLANDSE HOOGTE/ REX/SHUTTERSTOCK H U NG A RY Bloc braces as populist Orbán takes charge of EU agenda By Jennifer Rankin BRUSSELS ‘My guess is that we see all kinds of new repressions carried out during this period’

19 O lena Ninadovska was inside Ukraine’s biggest printing house when the Russian missile hit. It was 10.20am. Two colleagues – Tet iana Khrapina and Olha Kurasova – stood next to her. The women were operating a row of book- sewing machines. Another employee, Sveta Arestova, had just stepped away to take a telephone call. The S-300 missile came through the roof . There was no warning. It instantly killed Ninadovksa and the others at her work station. Arestova was injured but survived. The blast fl ipped over a 10-tonne book - fi nishing machine, killing Svitlana Ryzhenko, who was sitting at the end of the assembly line. Two more workers died at an adjacent table. Another, Roman Stroyhi, was killed by shards from a guillotine machine. Seven people died in the attack on 23 May at the Factor Druk printing house in Kharkiv . Twenty-one were injured. Nine remain in hospital ; two in inten- sive care. The fi rm’s general director, Tetiana Hryniuk, said the strike was on one of the biggest printing complexes in Europe. Kharkiv, the second city after Kyiv, is Ukraine’s publishing hub. At the time Hryniuk was in a neighbouring building. “I saw smoke and fi re. Those near the epicentre stood no chance,” she said. “My memories are fragmentary. Everybody was in shock. I remember bandaging somebody with a T-shirt.” Hryniuk said she identifi ed Stroyhi and Ryz- henko when their bodies were pulled from the wreckage. But fi ve people, including Ninadovska, were so badly burned they were unrecognisable. “You couldn’t tell if it was a man or a woman. We needed DNA tests,” she said. Their remains have just been released . What did she say to her dead colleagues’ relatives? “We hugged and cried together,” she replied. Posting on Facebook , Anna Gyn paid tribute to Ninadovska, her murdered friend : “I always adored the smell of books. Now, probably, they will always remind me of ashes and blood .” Hryniuk said she did not know if the Russian military had targeted her workplace or attempted to hit a train repair workshop next door. Three more S-300 missiles fell at the same time. Whatever Moscow’s intentions, the result, Hryniuk said, was the same: “They destroyed Ukrain- ian history and culture.” The strike on the factory wiped out 50,000 books. Among them were works of children’s literature and Ukrainian text books – 40% of them printed by Factor Druk – due to be sent to classrooms for the September start of the next academic year . “For me it’s so symbolic. They burned books, like the Nazis did 80 years ago. We have so many histori- cal examples of Russia trying to kill off Ukrainian culture,” said Oleksiy Sobol , the head of the pre-press department . The Russian empire banned Ukrainian - language texts from the 17th century onwards, with follow-up edicts. Under Stalin, in the 1930s, Ukrainian poets and writers were shot – a generation known as the “executed renaissance”. Since 2022, Russia has erased 172 ▼ A publisher shows children’s books damaged by a Russian missile strike on his print site VALENTYN OGIRENKO/ REUTERS libraries and nearly 2 m books, according to the Ukrainian Book Institute . Also lost in the Factor Druk strike was the fi rst print run of Words and Bullets , a collection of interviews about the war with Ukrainian writers including Victoria Amelina . It was due to be published last month. Amelina, a novelist and poet, was killed in June 2023 by a Russian missile strike on the eastern city of Kramatorsk . Yuliya Orlova , the chief executive of Vivat, one of Ukraine’s leading publishers , said Moscow wanted to “erase who we are” . A day after the strike, Ukraine’s p resident Volodymyr Zelenskiy toured the Factor Druk site. He said it demonstrated that Russia was “at war with humanity and all aspects of normal life”. The Howard G Buff e tt Foundation, meanwhile, has pledged €5.1 m ( $5.5m) to restore the printing house . “ They can destroy books but not Ukrainian resilience and com- mitment,” said Buff ett , the son of the billionaire US investor Warren Buff ett . For now, Kharkiv has lost a significant part of its printing resources . Three years ago, Factor Druk produced more than a million books a year. Now it prints none. Hryniuk said she was nevertheless optimistic about the future. “We have one,” she said. “History shows that every 100 years someone tries to extinguish Ukraine. Despite this we carry on living. ” LUKE HARDING IS A GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENT U K R A I N E War of words Deadly attack on Kharkiv book printer By Luke Harding KHARKIV Rewriting history In occupied areas, the Kremlin has forbidden the Ukrainian language, removed books from schools and imposed a patriotic pro- Russian curriculum. Statues of the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko have been torn down. Vladimir Putin insists Ukraine does not exist. Its land, he says, is a part of “historical Russia”. argeted her ted t ext -30 W e “T

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 20 Spotlight U N I T E D K I NGD OM GE N E R A L E L E C T ION Before the Conservatives came to power in 2010, David Cameron set out his vision of a prosperous, secure country that would care for all. By every yardstick, his party has failed The long and wasted years of Tory Britain By Tim Adams T here have been times in the past few weeks, watch- ing Rishi Sunak, with his hands fl ailing for the steer- ing wheel, when just for a second or two the ghosts of the Conservative party’s last 14 years have seemed to play across his features, and we all have been forced to endure the unspooling catastrophe once again : the Truss ▼ Prime minister David Cameron, right, and deputy P M Nick Clegg hold a press conference in 2010 CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/AP Europe ght e budget and Partygate and proroguing parliament and Theresa May croaking her way to her P45 and No Deal is Better than a Bad Deal and Eat out to Help Out and, God help us, Get Brexit Done. It all began with David Cameron on a conference stage in 2009 smoothly articulating his ideas for “compassionate Conservatism”, making the case for a Big Society. Re watching that speech now is a lesson in political befores and afters. Cameron was perhaps at the high point of his personal branding, the unlined Etonian insouciance intact. How the pundits thrilled to his capacity to wan- der a stage and speak without notes! Much like Sunak, Cameron could never convince you of the personal struggle of that quest; still he did his best to argue that “none of this will be easy. I will be tested. I’m ready for that – and so I believe, are the British people. So yes, there is a steep climb ahead. But I tell you this. The view from the summit will be worth it.” And here we are, 15 years on, worn out after that advertised long march, on top of a dispiriting mountain of broken promises and indebtedness . Hindsight allows you to fact check Cameron’s pledges . “I can look you in the eye and tell you that in a Conserva- tive Britain,” he began , “if you put in the eff ort to bring in a wage, you will be better off !” (In fact, wage growth in Britain was lower in the ensuing decade than in any decade since the battle of Waterloo). “If you save money your whole life,” he went on, “you’ll be rewarded!” (Britons, by independ- ent analysis, are on average £10,200 [$13,000] worse off than in 2010). “If you’re frightened,” he claimed, “we’ll protect you!” (nearly 2 million people are on waiting lists for mental health services). “And if you risk your life to fi ght for your country, we will honour you!” (The chaotic airlift from Kabul was overseen by a Tory foreign secretary who refused to cancel his summer holiday and a prime minister who allegedly prioritised headlines about repatriating dogs .) One of the telling features of rewatching those pledges is the con- trast with the tone of this campaign . No one promis ed much in the way of visionary hope this time around . Among Cameron’s big ideas was the notion that, in the wake of the bank crash, we had to fi nd other ways to measure our prosperity than GDP . “I see a country where it’s not just about the quantity of money, but the quality of life – where we lead the world in sav- ing our planet!”. (In 2009, a quarter of English rivers were judged as being of good ecological standard; by 2022 not one river was in a healthy state ). Cameron saved his clincher for the end. Far from downplaying his own privileges he argued that a Conserva- tive government would raise standards

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly ▼ Boris Johnson speaks after the Brexit referendum in 2016 ▼ Then home secretary Theresa May addresses the 2013 Tory party conference 2m The number of people currently on waiting lists for NHS mental health services 40% The cut in local councils’ funding between 2010 and 2020. Half of all local authorities have warned of bankruptcy within fi ve years 90% Ratio of crimes unresolved in 2023. Police funding in England fell more than 20% in an eight-year period ‘One ef fect of pursuing short- termism for so long is that its results are revealed while you are still in power’ for all children: “I see a country where the poorest children go to the best schools not the worst, where birth is never a barrier!” (The Institute for Fiscal Studies said this year that spend- ing on each schoolchild’s education in England has suff ered an unprece- dented freeze since 2010; a third of pupils on free school meals were per- sistently absent from school last year). Still for a while, the notion that the Conservative party had changed, that we might, despite all evidence to the contrary, be all in it together, vaguely persisted. I remember the moment when that mask slipped, when the tone hard- ened. I was in the Olympic stadium reporting on Danny Boyle ’s open- ing ceremony to the 2012 Games. In some ways the event was the great dramatisation of Cameron’s vision of a creative and dynamic nation pull- ing together: the skydiving Queen, the reconstructed achievements of the industrial revolution and the Win- drush generation, the triumphant cho- reography of the NHS. A tweet came up on my phone and I wrote it down . “The most leftie opening ceremony I have ever seen – more than Beijing, the capital of a communist state! Welfare tribute next?” I t came from one of the new intake of Tory MPs, 31-year-old Aidan Burley . His tweet was fol- lowed by another: “Thank God the athletes have arrived! Now we can move on from leftie multicultural crap. Bring back red arrows, Shake- speare and the Stones!” To begin with, Burley was reprimanded; Cameron called his remark idiotic. The party whip was withdrawn and Burley subsequently stepped down. But from that moment, it seemed, you began to hear versions of that sentiment more and more often. The simplest, saddest narrative of the past 14 years is how those voices from the margins came to dominate fi rst the Conservative party, and then large parts of the national conversa- tion. The party reverted to toxic type: in Theresa May’s “hostile environ- ment” for foreign-born citizens, in Boris Johnson’s “war on woke”, in the shameful Rwanda nonsense. There are many tragic morality tales in this history. In Andrew Hindmoor ’s recent book, Haywire , he suggests that the genesis of the Brexit referendum was a deal that Cameron made to protect his determination to legislate for equal marriage. The promise to hold a vote on EU membership was, in that reading, an attempt to buy off the homophobes – half of the parlia- mentary Conservative party. That deal demonstrated how shallow the reformist rhetoric had been. The “disruptors” , far from being assuaged, eventually found their champion in Cameron’s nemesis, Johnson. The constitutional historian Anthony Seldon summed up John- son’s motivation to me in an interview: “From the beginning it was striking that he believed in a cause far higher than Britain’s economic interests, than Britain’s relationship with Europe, than Britain’s place in the world, than the strength of the union. That cause was his own advancement.” If Johnson was the template for this absence of even the pretence of pro- bity or conscience, its ultimate itera- tion was Liz Truss, whose 49 days in power signed this administration’s death warrant. It is telling that Truss, along with Priti Patel and Matt Han- cock, had been the prime benefi ciaries of Cameron’s demands for loyalty at all costs, fast-tracked for sycophancy . Rory Stewart’s memoir of being near the heart of government in those years off ers many scenes that illustrate the vacuity of that principle. Truss was Stewart’s ministerial superior at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Aff airs. On his fi rst day he presented a plan for his fi rst months in offi ce, a complex listening exercise to various experts leading to a plan of action for rivers and fl ood defence and national parks. Truss’s response was to laugh. She told him to produce a plan, any old plan, in time for the weekend’s papers ; and to cut 20% of his depart- ment, on top of cuts already agreed. One eff ect of pursuing short- termism for so long is that its consequences are revealed while you are still in govern- ment. The latter years of the Tories’ car crash Life Review would, in this regard, feature scenes from a succes- sion of public inquiries – into Covid, Grenfell, the (inherited) contaminated blood review, the Post Offi ce scandal. Sitting through any of these inquiries has been to experience how the corrosive attacks on institutions have been felt within them; how many of the people who might have saved us have become beleaguered or demor- alised or sidelined or absent. There have been many theories as to why Sunak called this election. The most persuasive for me is that he wanted to get out before the bills for some of those derelictions of duty, and failures of regulation, have to be paid. Before the £10bn cost of compensating the contaminated blood families comes in, before Thames Water collapses with its £20bn debt. It is fi tting, in this regard, that this year began with the ITV true-life drama Mr Bates vs the Post Offi ce . If any institution represented the trad- itions Cameron wanted to tap into with his Big Society it might have been the network of Post Offi ce operators . There was something deeply emblem- atic about their systemic betrayal. I asked Gwyneth Hughes , who had written the drama, about why she thought it had touched such a nerve . “I think a key reason it has been a runaway success,” she suggested, “is that an awful lot of people feel, in their own small way, as though they have been going through something similar. They feel like those people hanging on to the wretched Horizon helpline, which they used to call the ‘hell line’. They feel unheard.” Observer TIM ADAMS IS AN OBSERVER FEATURE WRITER 10.2k The average amount, in pounds, ($13,000) by which Britons are calculated to be worse off now than in 2010

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 24 Spotlight I srael’s offensive in Gaza has become the deadliest confl ict for journalists in recent history, but its military has repeatedly said it is not targeting the media. However, an investigation by the Guardian sug- gests that some in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) appear to have viewed journalists working in Gaza for out- lets controlled by or affi liated with Hamas to be legitimate military tar- gets. The investigation is part of the Gaza project, a collaboration led by the Paris-based non-profi t Forbid- den Stories, which has analysed the deaths of journalists in Gaza since Israel began its off ensive. The US-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) records at least 103 Palestinian journalists and media workers killed in the war in Gaza. Other lists suggest the number is higher. Since foreign media are blocked by Israel from entering Gaza, the work of documenting the war on the ground has fallen to Palestinian journalists, many of whom work despite grave risks to their safety. Given that Israel has dropped tens of thousands of bombs on a densely populated territory, it is inevitable so many journalists have been killed. But the high number has raised concerns among press freedom organisations that the IDF has deliberately sought to silence critical reporting. Among those listed by the CPJ as having been killed in Gaza since 7 October, about 30% worked for media outlets affi li- ated with or closely tied to Hamas. Working with Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), a Jordan-based non-profi t, the Guardian identifi ed at least 23 individuals killed since 7 October who worked for the largest Hamas-run outlet in Gaza, al-Aqsa media network. Considered the Hamas offi cial channel, al-Aqsa employed hundreds of people in Gaza. Asked about the casualties, a senior IDF spokesperson told reporters in the Gaza project consortium that there was “no diff erence” between working for the media outlet and belonging to Hamas’s armed wing, a statement legal experts described as alarming. “It’s a shocking statement,” said Adil Haque, a law professor at Rut- gers University in the US, describing the position as showing “a complete misunderstanding or just a wilful disregard for international law”. Al-Aqsa’s programming is unmistakably pro-Hamas, anti-Israel and, at times, antisemitic. “Hamas believes the media is an important tool to approach people and deliver their message and propaganda,” a veteran Gaza-based journalist said. “They defend Hamas, no matter what.” In 2018, the IDF bombed al-Aqsa’s offices and claimed its building was used for military purposes. The following year, Israel’s prime minister, � Journalist Salma Mkhaimer and her son, who both died in an Israeli airstrike FAMILY OF SALMA MKHAIMER Middle East I SR A E L / PA L E S T I N E ‘Grey zone’ How the IDF views some journalists as targets Despite denials by Israel of deliberate targeting to silence critics, record number of media workers killed in Gaza By Harry Davies, Manisha Ganguly and David Pegg 103 Number of Palestinian journalists and media workers killed in the war in Gaza. Some lists sugg est a higher toll

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 25 S udan is facing horror “beyond imagination”, the outgoing UN aid chief has warned, with 750,000 people under imminent threat of famine and with conditions in danger of worsening even further. The British diplomat Martin Griffi ths is stepping down as the UN’s under secretary-general for humani- tarian aff airs at a time when famine on a historic scale is looming over Sudan and Gaza. Griffi ths told the Guardian that while Gaza is the subject of intense diplomatic eff ort , another – potentially much larger – human-made tragedy is unfolding in Sudan, largely out of the world’s sight, and with little sign of diplomatic progress. Statistics published last week by the Integrated Food Security Phase Clas- sifi cation (IPC) showed that 495,000 Palestinians in Gaza face catastrophic conditions, defi ned as an “extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaus- tion of coping capacities”, over the coming six months. Over the same period, the experts estimated that 755,262 people in Sudan also face “phase 5” catastrophic con- ditions, while a further 8.5 million Sudanese face a “phase 4” emergency, defined as a state where “acute malnutrition and disease levels are excessively high, and the risk of hun- ger-related death is rapidly increasing”. “These are staggering numbers. It’s beyond imagination,” said Griffi ths . “I think historically it is a huge moment.” He agreed with estimates by top US offi cials that the outcome in Sudan could be even worse than the historic famine in Ethiopia, which killed 1 mil- lion people between 1983 and 1985, according to UN estimates. “There was massive international attention [on Ethiopia ], and massive generosity … whereas in Sudan, partly because journalists aren’t given visas to get to places, it’s very diffi cult to get the story out ,” Griffi ths said. The 2024 Sudan humanitarian needs and response plan asked for $2.7 bn to address the crisis , but as of last week, it was less than 17% funded. The two rival generals driving the civil war, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan , the head of the Sudanese armed forces (SAF) and the country’s de facto ruler, and Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo , the head of the paramilitary Rapid Sup- port Forces (RSF), have shrugged off mediation eff orts and both sides are blocking access for food and other humanitarian aid. “The worry is that we are not going to get the seeds in to do the planting season ,” Griffi ths said. In Gaza, Griffi ths noted that the numbers of Palestinians facing cata- strophic famine had halved since March, when those at risk numbered more than a million , but he warned the improvement could be short lived. “People can be rescued from famine and starvation and disease if aid is made available, and actually can be rescued quite quickly back from the abyss ,” Griffi ths said. He added that although criminality and mob looting had become major problems inside Gaza, it did not absolve Israel of responsibility as the occupying power. “The Israelis have an obligation under international laws to provide security for humanitarian aid, so it’s not right to say they’re not the prob- lem,” Griffi ths said. “They are part of the process that is needed to ensure the security of humanitarian deliveries.” JULIAN BORGER IS THE GUARDIAN’S WORLD AFFAIRS EDITOR Benjamin Netanyahu, used broad legal powers to designate the media group as a terrorist organisation. But such designations were made in domestic law and were not a licen ce for the IDF to kill , legal experts said. Under the laws of war, a journalist can lose their civilian status if they engage in combat operations. Just working for a body such as al-Aqsa does not make some- one a legitimate target. “Reporting the news is not direct participation in hostilities,” said Janina Dill of Oxford University, an expert in the laws of war. “Even if Israel fundamentally disagrees with how they report the news. That is not enough.” Multiple Israeli sources said there had been a permissive approach to targeting across the IDF in a war aimed at the “total destruction of Hamas”. A person with knowledge of legal advice given to IDF commanders said journalists working for Hamas- affi liated media were seen to exist in a “grey zone” and there was a “problematic” view among some in the IDF that “whenever there’s some- one getting a salary ultimately from Hamas” they were considered to be a legitimate target. In an interview with Radio France, one of the Guardian’s partners in the Gaza project, the senior IDF spokes- person, Col Olivier Rafowicz, said: “Al-Aqsa belongs to the Hamas war organisation and the people who work for it are active members of the war organisation of Hamas.” Among the journalists caught up in the destruction was Salma Mkhaimer, a 31-year-old freelance journalist based in Jordan who had worked for a number of Gaza-based media outlets, including al-Aqsa. Mkhaimer was visiting family in Gaza with her baby, Ali, when the war began. Trapped in an area the IDF said would be safe, she was on the phone with her husband on 24 Octo- ber – Ali’s fi rst birthday – when an airstrike hit the building, killing her, Ali and 23 relatives. Talking to the Guardian, Mkhaimer’s husband, Alaa Naser Abushawer, said: “On my last call with Salma, she said , ‘We must stop the war.’” HARRY DAVIES, MANISHA GANGULY AND DAVID PEGG ARE GUARDIAN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS Additional reporting by Hoda Osman, Yuval Abraham and Bethan McKernan UN aid chief departs with warning of ‘huge’ famine By Julian Borger WASHINGTON S U DA N � A colleague carries the bloodied vest of Palestine TV reporter Mohammed Abu Hatab, who was killed in an airstrike ARAFAT BARBAKH/ REUTERS Africa Spotlight Press threat Media deaths rise in Gaza The Gaza project is a collaboration of 13 media organisations coordinated by Forbidden Stories, a non- profi t continuing the work of journalists under threat. It tells the stories of Palestinian journalists who are either unable to leave or who have chosen to stay, many of whom have been killed. The Gaza project spoke to dozens of witnesses, and used forensic and open source analysis to understand how and why so many Palestinian journalists have died. � A woman and child wait to be seen on a malnutrition ward at a clinic in Kawdah

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 26 Spotlight Z uka Berdzenishvili ’s face was a canvas of rainbow colours, his piercing blue eyes partly blood stained above a pro- nounced purple bruise. Berdzenishvili, a prominent activist and co-founder of the Georgian pro-democracy movement Shame , was ambushed and beaten outside his house last month by a group of unknown assailants . “I got lucky. I had just arrived home on my scooter and was still wearing a helmet when they started beating me. Without it, my brain would have turned to soup,’ he said, speaking out- side the Georgian parliament in central Tbilisi, where a month earlier the ruling Georgian Dream party passed a controversial “ foreign agents” law that brought hundreds of thousands of people into the streets in protest . The law has also derailed Georgia’s long-held EU aspirations in favour of closer ties with Moscow. Mass protests in the country have largely faded away since it was passed. Meanwhile, the Georgian gov- ernment is doubling down on its anti-western shift before parliamen- tary elections in October, openly casting critics as traitors and accused of orchestrating violence against them. More than a dozen NGO workers, opposition politicians and activists have been targeted by unidentifi ed gangs, which are widely believed to have links to the government. Berdzenishvili’s attack came just after the speaker of Georgia’s parlia- ment, Shalva Papuashvili , accused him and other activists in a Facebook post of engaging in “politically moti- vated terror” sponsored by the EU. “That post served as a green light to attack us,” said Salome Nikoleishvili, Berdzenishvili’s partner, who found him lying on the pavement outside their apartment, shouting for help. “Since passing the foreign agent law, the Georgian Dream has been on the off ensive,” said Berdzenishvil i. “Their masks are off . They openly declare fear and violence will be their way to rule Georgia, just like in Russia .” Georgian Dream , led by the shadowy billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who made his fortune in Russia in the 1990s, also recently introduced draft legislation curtailing LGBTQ+ rights, which critics said was also borrowed from Moscow’s playbook. T he anger that brought people to the streets in May remains palpable in the medieval streets of Tbilisi. “The momentum is with us. Behind these attacks is actually a fear of their own people,” said Berdzenishvili. “But they won’t silence us.” Berdzenishvili and Nikoleishvili say they had never seen any protests as united as those that took place in May. “There was gen Z with tattoos and piercings standing alongside pen- sioners. People who otherwise have no thing in common were united by their outrage,” Berdzenishvili said. “This movement is unprecedented. It is grassroots, without obvious leaders,” said Nikoleishvili. “They can’t just jail a few fi gureheads to stop it.” The opposition has pinned its hopes ▲ Police clash with protesters in Tbilisi before the introduction of the ‘foreign agents ’ law in May DARO SULAKAURI/GETTY � Activist Zuka Berdzenishvili was attacked outside his home ZUKA BERDZENISHVILI GE ORGI A ‘They won’t silence us’ Activist’s vow after ambush and beating Opposition is pinning its hopes on parliamentary elections in October, amid attacks on government critics By Pjotr Sauer TBILISI Europe

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 27 A Bosnian actor who was deported from Serbia last week has said he believes he was expelled for writing openly about his experience in the war in the 1990s and that “there is no such thing” as freedom of expres- sion under the Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić . Serbian authorities detained Fedja Stukan after he arrived at a Belgrade air- port to attend a literary festival and put him on a fl ight to Sarajevo on 24 June. Stukan – an activist, author and actor known for his role in Angelina Jolie’s 2011 fi lm In the Land of Blood and Honey, about the war in Bosnia – said the Serbian authorities had designated him a “national security risk”. But, he said, the real reason for his deportation was his blunt writing. “I wrote a very dangerous book,” he said . “I quit heroin, alcohol and everything, and I became a pilot and father and movie producer and actor, and I wrote a book about my life. I was a sniper in a war. I was in special combat in a war. So I know things, I know how they were done during the war . “I told everything about everyone, and all of those nationalists just hate me so much because they know that I touched them in the right place .” Stukan’s autobiography , Blank , describes his journey from the front- lines of the war in Bosnia to political activism and Hollywood fi lm-making. More than 100,000 people were killed in the 1992- 95 war, with Serb forces tried and convicted of committing war crimes. The confl ict remains a sensi- tive issue in the region. Stukan, who has previously participated in anti-government protests in Belgrade, also took aim at Serbia’s leadership, arguing that the country’s president allows some oppo- sition voices to maintain a veneer of democracy. “There is no such thing,” he said, when asked about freedom of speech and expression in Serbia. Watchdogs and opposition groups have long raised concerns about the state of democracy in Serbia. In a recent report , Freedom House think- tank pointed to “unfair electoral con- ditions and numerous irregularities” in the elections in December and “an increasingly hostile environment for critical journalism ”. Vučić’s offi ce did not respond to a request for comment. He has previ- ously described Stukan as a “criminal”. Stukan recalled a dinner in Belgrade with people from the arts industry, when the subject of Serbia’s presi- dent came up. “They all just lifted the telephones and put them under the leg, on the chair, so they covered the microphone. Everybody did that,” he said. “If you say something against Vučić, you will never get the money for the next project … When they speak about Vučić, they’re whispering.” The actor said he was previously expelled from Serbia but believed – before the incident last week – that he would be able to return. P en International, an association of writers, said it was “concerned” about reports of Stukan’s deport ation . “I think they [the authorities] don’t know really where they should put me in, and what they want to do with me,” Stukan said. “They just don’t want me to be in Serbia.” LILI BAYER IS THE GUARDIAN’S EUROPE LIVE BLOGGER Actor issues free speech warning after deportation By Lili Bayer SE R BI A ▲ Fedja Stukan Contentious law The “foreign agents” law, which obliges civil society organisations and media that receive more than 20% of their revenues from abroad to register as “organisations serving the interests of a foreign power”, is regarded by critics at home and internationally as a copy of legislation introduced in Russia in 2012 by Vladimir Putin to silence dissenting voices. ‘If you say something against Vučić, you will never get the money for the next project ’ on October’s elections, and plans to organise a series of protests in the run-up to the vote . At stake, Nikoleishvili said, was not only Georgia’s path to the EU, which up to 80% of Georgians support , but its independence . However, some observers question if the unity of the protests will trans- late into the election results and whether the lack of a clear opposi- tion leader could benefi t the ruling party. Georgia’s opposition politics is notoriously divided, with the United National Movement (UNM) , Geor- gia’s former ruling party (2004-12) and most powerful opposition force, a polarising fi xture . “We are calling for the opposition to unite before the elections … it’s very important to make sure that we as the opposition can convert and transform the energy that we saw in the streets into electoral victory,” said Tina Bokuchava , the chair of the UNM. But she said the prospect of a united opposition was not on the cards . Bokuchava was speaking from the party’s Tbilisi headquarters, which is adorned with pictures of its founder and former Georgian leader, Mikheil Saakashvili , who was jailed by the ruling party in 2021. She said she and her allies in UNM had also been har- assed and attacked recently, describ- ing how she had received threatening phone calls trying to silence her . “We know that it’s the government organising this large-scale terror cam- paign ,” she said. “Ivanishvili is trying to win before the actual election takes place. He is trying to scare people .” So far, western efforts to bring Georgia back into its orbit have failed. While the EU has stated it will freeze Georgia’s accession bid as long as the “foreign agents” law is in place, the US has announced travel sanctions will be imposed on Georgian offi cials “who are responsible for or complicit in undermining democracy in Georgia”. Bokuchava welcomed the sanctions, seeing them as a sign the west was prepared to move beyond rhetoric. In the end, though, she said, it would be the Georgian people who would have to turn up in October. “People realise this is a unique window of opportunity for European integration,” she said. “That window might close. And we can’t let it happen.” PJOTR SAUER IS A RUSSIAN AFFAIRS REPORTER FOR THE GUARDIAN

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 28 J ust a stone’s throw from North Korea, farmer Park Se-un tends to his crops under the watchful eye of the South Korean mili- tary. In the distance, past bushes and fi elds strewn with landmines, he can see North Korean soldiers on patrol. Park’s village of Daeseong-dong is the only inhabited area in the south of Korea’s demilitarised zone (DMZ), at one point just 365 metres from North Korea . Born and raised inside this zone, Park is used to political tensions . Described as “the scariest place on Earth” by Bill Clinton when he visited as president in 1993, the DMZ has served as a buff er between the two Koreas since their three-year confl ict ended in 1953 with an armistice but not a peace treaty – meaning that the neighbours are still technically at war. It has since become one of the most reliable indicators of the state of inter-Korean aff airs and in recent weeks, events along the border sug- gest the region has entered a new period of tension and uncertainty. The North has sent thousands of balloons over that scattered their con- tents – manure, cigarette butts, used batteries, cloth scraps and wastepaper – on South Korean streets. Defector groups in the South have reciprocated with balloons whose cargo, including leafl ets and USB sticks loaded with K-pop and K-dramas, are designed to undermine the legitimacy of the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un. Perhaps most worrying are three reported “incursions” last month by 20 to 30 North Korean soldiers into the southern side of the demarcation line, the border running through the centre of the 4 km-wide, 25 0km-long DMZ. The incidents, which ended with the soldiers retreating after their coun- terparts in the South fi red warning shots, have been described by media as “accidental”. One explanation is that foliage in the area is so thick that the North Korean soldiers were unable to see the thin line dividing their coun- try from enemy territory. With tensions across the DMZ rising, residents like Park now fi nd them- selves hoping this fragile peace can continue. “This all makes us nervous. What if something happens? ” he said. Tasked with monitoring these events is the Neutral Nations Super- visory Commission (NNSC), which has actively monitored the DMZ since 1953 and is currently composed of just fi ve Swiss and fi ve Swedish soldiers. Maj Gen Ivo Burgener, head of the Swiss NNSC Delegation, is used to life in the DMZ, but he explain ed that the situation has changed recently. “In the last four to fi ve weeks it’s been getting more intense,” Burgener said. “The explosions seem to be nearer, and louder.” Since the scrapping of the comprehensive military agreement , a deal struck in 2018 that sought to lower the risk of an accidental confl ict in the DMZ, both North and South have increasingly militarised the border. “There are more personnel, there are more weapons, and they are com- ing closer together,” said L t Col Livio Räber, an operations offi cer for the Swiss NNSC. Burgener suspects the nearby explosions stem from North Korea’s increased laying of mines along the DMZ, even after mine explosions reportedly killed or wounded an unspecifi ed number of its soldiers . But he says the lack of dialogue makes it hard for the NNSC to verify. In the DMZ’s Daeseong-dong village, residents receive phone alerts warning them about incoming North Korean balloons on an almost daily basis. The clear rise in tensions leave Park concerned that confl ict could break out. “I do worry about possible war,” Park said. “It’s natural to think about it since tensions are growing.” Despite the “balloon wars” and warning shots, a descent into hostilities is unlikely. The DMZ will, however, continue to be at the cen- tre of the latest round of tit-for-tat reprisals from both sides. Satellite images suggest that North Korea is building what appear to be anti-tank barriers and reinforcing roads. Some experts believe the fortifi cations are intended to deter defections among North Korean soldiers. But defections across the DMZ are rare. Park sa id that while his ancestors have lived in the village for generations, his grandfather’s tomb is actually on the North Korean side of the border, and is inaccessible to members of his family. “My personal hope is to become unifi ed, to live in peace where I am free to go wherever I wish,” he said. JAN CAMENZIND BROOMBY IS A JOURNALIST BASED IN TAIWAN; JUSTIN MCCURRY IS THE GUARDIAN’S TOKYO CORRESPONDENT Additional reporting by Park Seo Jeong � South Korean soldiers patrol along the demilitarised zone ED JONES/AFP /GETTY NORT H /S OU T H KOR E A ‘This makes us nervous’ Balloon wars raise stakes in the DMZ By Jan Camenzind Broomby PANMUNJOM and Justin McCurry Spotlight Asia Pacif ic ‘ There are more personnel, more weapons, and they are coming closer’

29 Spotlight Africa L ast month, the governor of Zamfara , one of Nigeria’s poorest states, held a cere- mony to mark the start of construction on an international air- port in the state capital Gusau . “The economic benefits and multi plier eff ects … are quite enor- mous,” Dauda Lawal said. “The airport will have a tremendous impact on the ease of doing business and other social interactions [here].” Barely a month before, Alex Otti , the governor of Abia state , had thanked federal offi cials for approving an airstrip project and said he would be lobby ing for an upgrade to a full air- port . “A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step,” Otti said. Airports have been springing up around the country in recent years ; for the most part absent are any concerns about the environmental impact of air travel. Nigeria already has 33 airports – all but two entirely owned by the federal or state governments – as well as 13 airstrips, four military airfi elds and 128 sites with helipads. However, the number of journeys taken by air fell last year to 15.89m, down from 16.17m in 2022. Passenger traffi c is incredibly concentrated: just three airports accounted for 92% of all passenger journeys nationwide in 2022, according to the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority . For some observers, the rush to build airports is less about economics and more about political prestige. “The simplest answer is that [polit icians] have run away from roads the way they ran away from the railways … because roads are harder to fi x and need more coordination,” said Feyi Fawehinmi , a political com- mentator. “[Airports] are also shiny and building them allows politicians to say they’ve ‘connected’ their state to the rest of the country and the world.” Some state governments have opened airports only to fi nd it hard to maintain them. Last year an airport was inaugurated in Ebonyi state that cost 36bn naira ( $23m). Months later, an additional 13.7bn naira was spent on repairing its barely used runway. Then, in May , the federal government said it was stepping in to take over the facility from the state. “We have FEC [ the Nige- rian cabinet] approval,” an offi cial said. “The only thing left is for us to refund the Ebonyi state government.” Nigeria’s aviation minister, Festus Keyamo , defended the latest projects as a “social amenity for the people”. “In a vast country like Nigeria that is also very sensitive in terms of geo- political issues, ethnic balancing and all, you want to ensure that infrastruc- ture is evenly distributed,” he said. Some experts agreed that having plenty of airports could be benefi cial to Africa’s most populous country. “Heathrow used to be a village until the airport came,” said Samuel Akinyele Caulcrick , a former rector of the Nigerian College of Aviation Tech- nology . “ What we should be asking is why are we not using them to their full potential, because airports are sup- posed to drive development .” Part of the problem is cost: fare s have doubled in the past three years ▼ Aviation experts say Nigeria’s airports are underused SUNDAY ALAMBA/AP in a country where more than half the population live on less than $2 a day . In 2023 the International Air Transport Association (Iata) said the $100- a-passenger service charge at Lagos and Abuja airports was the most expensive globally. “How can you have such high taxes and expect to be profi table?” Kamil Al-A wadhi , I ata’s vice-president for Africa and Middle East, reportedly said at the time. One solution put forward at industry forums to reduc e the number of “ghost” airports operating far under capacity is for an expansion in freight transportation by plane. Ton i Ukachukwu , the head of the Lagos-based consultancy Aviators Africa and host of ASAP , a podcast on industry sustainability, said the industry needed to expand beyond traditional commercial and business passenger aviation in large jets. “ In South Africa and Kenya, you have your three-, four- and fi ve-seater airplanes that do scenic fl ights, agricul- tural fl ights, game reserve fl ights ,” he said. “We don’t have that in Nigeria.” Ukachukwu suggested the industry should learn from a rare domestic success story. “Ibom Air is one model Nigerian operators need to look at,” he said, referring to the oil-rich Akwa Ibom state’s carrier, which has a repu- tation for punctuality. “State-owned but independently managed by pro- fessionals … for fi ve years, they have steadily grown to where they are now.” EROMO EGBEJULE IS THE GUARDIAN’S WEST AFRICA CORRESPONDENT N IGE R I A Airports are everywhere – but where are all the passengers? By Eromo Egbejule ABIDJAN Jet set An industry at odds with itself 33 Number of airports in Nigeria, all but two of which are government-run 15. 9m Number of air journeys taken last year, 0.28m down from 2022 92% Of passenger journeys in Nigeria pass through just three airports

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 30 Spotlight Science vertebrae, and more! Tom and I yelled, hugged each other, and danced, mad as any Englishman in the midday sun!” Johanson and Gray drove back to their camp in jubilation . Beer was cooled in the Awash River and barbe- cued goat was served to celebrate their discovery – which, by any account, was a sensational one. A total of 47 bones from a single, ancient hominin (the term used to defi ne humans and all our extinct bipedal relatives) were ulti- mately uncovered by Johanson and Gray at the site. The fragments they collected amounted to about 40% of a complete skeleton, and subsequent dating has shown that these remains are around 3.2m years old. At the time, it was the oldest human-like being that had ever been unearthed by fossil hunters, and she was given the name Lucy. Fifty years on, Johanson and Gray’s discovery remains one of the most notable breakthroughs ever made O n 24 November 1974, the US anthropologist Donald Johanson was scrabbling through a ravine at Hadar in the Afar region of Ethiopia with his research student, Tom Gray. The pair were looking for fossilised ani- mal bones in the surrounding silt and ash when Johanson spotted a tiny fragment of arm bone – and realised it belonged to a human-like creature. “We looked up the slope,” Johanson later recalled. “There, incredibly, lay a multitude of bone fragments – a nearly complete lower jaw, a thighbone, ribs, in the fi eld of human palaeontology. From the pelvis, scientists concluded it belonged to a female, while her short legs suggested she had only been about 1.2 metres tall. This discovery was followed up with other, similar fi nds, some in Ethiopia and some in Tanzania, and in 1978, Johanson – working with a colleague, Tim White – announced that these bones, includ- ing Lucy’s, had all come from a single, previously unknown hominin species, which they named Australopithecus afarensis: the Southern Ape from Afar. Johanson and White placed afarensis at the base of a tree of ancestry that led to more recent spe- cies, such as Homo erectus and later the Neander thals and Homo sapiens. From this perspective, Lucy was the mother of humanity. And although subsequent research and other fossil fi nds have led to some revisions of Lucy’s elevated status, the very fact she walked upright despite PA L A E ON T OL O GY By Robin McKie Fifty years on, how the f ind of a remarkable skeleton in Ethiopia changed our understanding of evolution Australopithecus afarensis, ‘Lucy’ Proconsul sp., depicted hypothetically as an ape Homo habilis Homo erectus Homo neanderthalensis

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 31 her small brain was a discovery of considerable importance, sa id palaeo- anthropologist Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum, London. “Human beings have three key attributes: our ability to walk upright, our capacity to make tools, and our large brains,” sa id Stringer. “But a crucial question is: which of these features arrived fi rst in our evolu- tion? What was the fi rst step that led our ancestors to move down a road that ultimately led to the appearance of Homo sapiens?” In The Descent of Man, Darwin argued that the three human features – bipedalism, tool-making and large brains – evolved in concert, a devel- opment in one stimulating the others to evolve further. On that basis, brain enlargement would be part of human evolution from its inception. Then came the discovery of Lucy. “Lucy showed this idea was simply not true,” sa id Stringer. “Her skeleton showed our ancestors walked on two feet long before their brains got big.” This point is backed by Zeresenay Alemseged, a palaeoanthropologist at Chicago University. “Lucy showed that a big brain was not the sine qua non of being a member of the human lineage,” he sa id. It is an intriguing observation, which raises key questions. Why did our ancestors adopt a bipedal gait in the fi rst place? What evolutionary advantages did it give them? Many answers have been proposed over the years. Walking on two feet, apemen would have had arms free to pick fruits from low-lying branches and could also carry food and babies. Standing upright, they would have appeared larger and more intimidat- ing, while reducing the level of the harsh African sunlight beating down on their backs. The most probable reason was more prosaic, argues Alemseged. “When you walk on two legs, as opposed to four, you save energy. It is as simple as that .” Lucy’s discovery placed afarensis at the heart of the story of human evolu- tion. However, since her presence was fi rst revealed in Hadar, many fossils of other, even older hominin species have been found. These include Aus- tralopithecus anamensis, which – 4m years ago – ambled across terrain that lies in Kenya and Ethiopia today, and Ardipithecus ramidus, which lived around 4.5m years ago in a similar patch of Africa. Crucially, these early Homo genus and ultimately to our own species, Homo sapiens.” Lucy’s remains are housed at the National Museum of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, where Alemseged – who was born in Ethiopia – made headlines in 2015 when showed Lucy to Barack Obama during the president’s state visit. She is the precursor of all humans today, he told Obama. “Every single person, even Donald Trump.” Other scientists are more cautious about Lucy’s exact relation to humans today. “The problem is that we have only two areas from which we have good fossil evidence of hominin evolu- tion: in the Rift Valley areas of Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia; and in South Africa,” Stringer point ed out. “In the former, there are lakes, rivers and sediments in which it is relatively easy to fi nd fossils, while in South Africa, there are lots of caves where early hominins became fossil- ised. That gives you a very biased pic- ture of hominin evolution in Africa. We don’t know what happened elsewhere in the continent,” Stringer add ed. Nevertheless, it is clear Lucy played a major part in developing our under- standing of our own species – though her naming was rather haphazard, as Johanson admitted in recollections of the days that followed her discovery . “ As we sat around one evening listen- ing to Beatles songs, someone said: ‘Why don’t we call her after Lucy? You know, after Lucy in the Sky With Dia- monds.’ So she became Lucy.” The name is perhaps irrelevant, however. “The crucial point is that she was a great trailblazer for high- lighting early human evolution,” sa id Stringer. Observer ROBIN MCKIE IS THE OBSERVER’S SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT EDITOR ‘Lucy’s skeleton showed our ancestors walked on two feet long before their brains got big’ � Lucy, the 3.2m-year-old skeleton found in Ethiopia in 1974 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM/ALAMY apemen also have anatomies that suggest they were bipedal. So, could one of these species – and not afarensis – have been the true origi- nator of the lineage that led to Homo sapiens? Was Lucy merely a great aunt of humanity, not its mother? Some sci- entists believe this could be the case. However, Alemseged has his doubts. “These earlier hominins probably walked upright for some of the time, but many were probably living in trees for most of their lives. In contrast, Lucy and her afarensis kin were spending a great deal of time walking upright. They were pivotal in the transforma- tion of our genus into one that became committed to an upright stance.” W ith Lucy, our lineage reached the stage where walking upright became commonplace. We became obligate bipedal animals, the defi ning feature of the genus that eventually produced Homo sapiens. Alemseged’s contribution to this fi eld was his discovery, in 2000, of Selam, the almost complete fossil skull and parts of the skeleton of a child of Australopithecus afarensis. It is some- times referred to as “Dikika child” or “Lucy’s child”, though the skull has been dated as being 3.3m years old, and is therefore more than 100,000 years older than Lucy. “We have now found afarensis in Tanzania, Chad, Kenya and Ethiopia, and we know Lucy and her kin must have lived in these parts of Africa for close to a million years,” said Alemseged. “That antiquity and extensive geographical spread convince me that it is the most likely candidate to have given rise to the many species of the Homo sapiens ▼ Lucy’s skull reconstructed SABENA JANE BLACKBIRD/ ALAMY

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 32 Spotlight subvert the results of the 2020 presidential election, including two counts of conspiring to obstruct the certifi cation of the election results, conspiring to defraud the government and conspiring to disenfranchise voters. The alleged illegal conduct came in fi ve categories: Trump pressuring US justice department offi cials to open sham investigations into election fraud ; Trump pressing his vice-president, Mike Pence, to return him to the White House ; Trump trying to obstruct Congress from certifying the election ; Trump giving a speech that led rioters to storm the US Capitol building and Trump’s plot to recruit fake electors . Roberts undercut at least three of the fi ve alleged categories in the opinion. Trump’s interactions with justice department offi cials were absolutely immune because overseeing the department was a core function, Roberts found. As for Trump’s interactions with Pence, including pressuring him to reject electoral votes for Joe Biden in Congress on January 6, they were presumptively immune because presidential discussions about vice- presidential responsibility were part of the job. The remaining allegations were left up to Chutkan. But even then, Roberts weighed in on a key conspiracy charge against Trump: obstruction of an offi cial proceeding before Congress. In the fi rst footnote in the majority opinion, Roberts instructed Chutkan to apply the supreme court’s determination in a previous, related ruling about the applicability of the obstruction statute when prosecuting January 6-related crimes. The ruling in Fischer v United States, handed down last week, held that the obstruction statute could only be used to prosecute crimes that impaired the integrity or the availability of documents. The footnote appeared to be a clear warning to Chutkan that she could not use Trump calling up Republican members of Congress on January 6 and pressuring them to continue delaying the certifi cation of the election results after the Capitol riot temporarily halted proceedings. Prosecutors may be left with only Trump’s plot to recruit fake electors – which is in many ways a circumstantial case about the extent of his personal knowledge – Trump’s speech on January 6 and some private conversations. The biggest blow to prosecutors may be the inability to present any of the offi cial acts at trial. HUGO LOWELL IS A GUARDIAN REPORTER COVERING DONALD TRUMP AND THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT; VICTORIA BEKIEMPIS WRITES THE TRUMP ON TRIAL NEWSLETTER A NA LYSI S U N I T E D S TAT E S On the line The supreme court handed Trump a partial win. Now what? By Hugo Lowell WASHINGTON and Victoria Bekiempis The US supreme court’s decision that Donald Trump has some immunity from criminal prosecution marked a win for the ex-president. While Trump is not off the hook in his federal election subversion case , he is even less likely to face trial in these proceedings before the election. The justices’ 6-3 decision, which fell squarely along ideological lines, will wind up delaying this trial, playing into Trump’s legal strategy of near-perpetual postponements. This decision, written by Chief Justice John Roberts, guts one of the allegations and challenges the legal viability of the others, raising the stakes still more. The court remanded the case back to the presiding US district judge Tanya Chutkan to apply a three-part test to decide which actions were protected – but Roberts pre emptively made clear that some were defi nitively out. On some of the closer calls, Roberts also gave suggestions on behalf of the majority conservative opinion, which could bear on Chutkan when she eventually weighs each allegation line by line and decides whether it can be introduced in any future trial. Most crucially for the special counsel, Jack Smith, his prosecutors will not be able to introduce as evidence any acts deemed to be offi cial , even as contextual information for jurors to show Trump’s intent. Trump is accused of overseeing eff orts to This decision guts one of the allegations and challenges the legal viability of the others North America Ruling means the former president is now less likely to face trial in the subversion case before the election p ntent. Trump is accused of overseeing eff ort This decision guts one of th allegations and challenges legal viability of the others � The decision will delay Donald Trump’s federal case trial ANDREW CABALLERO- REYNOLDS/AFP/ GETTY

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 33 Spotlight Global A s Julian Assange enjoy ed his fi rst weekend of freedom in years, there appeared to be no question in the mind of his wife, Stella , about what the family’s priorities were. The Wiki Leaks co-founder would need time to recover, she told reporters after they were reunited in his native Australia, after a deal with US authorities that allowed him to plead guilty to a single criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classifi ed defence documents. What comes after that is an intriguing question for anyone familiar with how the site he founded in 2006 utterly changed the nature of whistleblow- ing. Will it return to its original mission? While it remains online – and would- be whistleblowers can theoretically use it to pass on secrets – the organi- sation around it has been re purposed in recent years to campaign for Assange’s freedom. Assange himself told the Nation magazine in an interview inside Belmarsh prison, London, that it had not been possible to publish leaks due to his imprisonment, US government surveillance and funding restrictions. Other issues are also starkly un avoidable, not least the fact that the type of encryption technology and other processes that Wiki Leaks in many ways pioneered now exist in every good news organisation. James Harkin , the director of the London-based Centre for Investigative Journalism , said interest in Wiki Leaks – which he characterised as “a loose alliance between investigative jour- nalists and information anarchists” – emerged from a profound frustra- tion with the mainstream media’s inability to report what western states were really doing in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. It was one reason the centre loaned Assange and Wiki Leaks some of its time and interns – the site was doing something fresh. But he added: “Now some of those lessons have been learned. The kind of cross-border, collaborative inves- tigations into huge tranches of docu- ments that Wiki Leaks pioneered and its use of anonymous electronic information drops are now de rigueur – to a large extent passé .” Another problem for many relates to some of the company kept and alliances formed by Assange, a mercurial character who has had his fair share of falling-outs – including with the Guardian. Before entering the Ecuadorian embassy, he had started hosting interview shows for RT, the Russian state media outlet, in a move that was relatively easier to defend at the time but which now takes on a diff erent hue since the outbreak of the Ukraine war. That said, even some critics of Assange suggest that there may be a role for Wiki Leaks, with or without him onboard. James Ball , a journalist and former WikiLeaks staff member, said “the smart move” would be for Assange and WikiLeaks to become a fi gure head for transparency activism. “It’s diffi cult to see how they can return to what they were doing before. They were well ahead of the curve originally, but frankly they became sloppy and there was a problem of inexperienced volunteers coming in and out, with people not being vetted,” he said. “People around him have said that it’s taken a toll on his health and I’m sure he’ll want to catch his breath, so if he wanted a quiet life that would be understandable.” While much of the WikiLeaks public output has been focused on Assange’s predicament, the site has continued to maintain a presence as a platform for amplifying the journalism of others. As well as this, the ripples of its original leaks continue to have an impact in big and small ways. Last week, in the UK, the populist right- wing Reform party dropped one of its election candidates after it was revealed that he had been named on a list originally leaked to WikiLeaks that showed the membership in 2016 of the far-right British National party (BNP). Whatever happens, few who known him expect Assange to spend the rest of his life on an Australian beach. Stefania Maurizi , a journalist for the Italian daily newspaper Il Fatto Quotidiano, who has worked as a media partner of WikiLeaks since 2009, emphasised what she described as the “exceptional resilience and determination” of the organisation and its founder. She said that she would understand if Assange and the Wiki Leaks journalists wanted to move on, but add ed: “ Many times in the past WikiLeaks has been considered dead, gone, and yet it is still making headlines around the world. You can expect everything from Julian Assange and WikiLeaks.” BEN QUINN IS AN ACTING POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT FOR THE GUARDIAN W I K I L E A K S New chapter What next for Julian Assange and WikiLeaks? By Ben Quinn � Julian Assange arrives at Canberra airport last week WILLIAM WEST/ AFP/GETTY Opinion p48� ‘It’s dif ﬁ cult to see how they can return to what they were doing before’ James Ball Former WikiLeaks staf f

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 36 Lenders of last resort HEN, ONE THURSDAY MORNING last winter, I arrived at Battle library in west Reading, the library manager, Terry Curran , was sitting at the front desk writing a quiz. “It’s not a hard quiz,” said Curran, who was worried about attend- ance. “Often just the same two ladies turn up, and they don’t pay attention.” Still, he hadn’t lost hope. He’d even put posters up in the Tesco round the corner. The phone rang. “Yes, we have a children’s craft session at two,” said Curran’s colleague Amanda Giles, her voice warm and encouraging. “Just come along.” They’d already received an urgent request from the housing team at a nearby council, about someone who had to scan a form by 2pm if he was going to be housed before Christmas. Could the library help? They didn’t usually off er scans, but Battle would make an exception – and they wouldn’t charge. A man carrying a plastic bag rustled up to the front desk. He twitched as he spoke . “Do you have a magnifying glass?” he asked. Curran disappeared into the offi ce and returned with a small purple magnifying glass from a children’s game. The man thanked him and made for the computers. A n elderly gentleman with a courtly air had a question about the library’s irregular opening hours. “They’re diffi cult for me to understand,” he said. “They’re hard for me as well,” answered Curran. “This library is a very friendly type of place,” added the man, unprompted. “I’ve written a letter about it.” Another man, in late middle age, took a seat at the quiz table and started reading a Mick Herron novel. Curran turned to me and stage- whispered: “Yes! There’s going to be one other person!” In the event there were fi ve: the Herron-reading man, the elderly gentleman and three women, who seemed to be friends, taking a break from errands. Curran began to panic that his questions were too easy. But it was too late to change anything, and at 11am they were off . Giles largely stayed at the desk, working through lists of books, preparing displays, monitoring the gaggles of children and parents wan- dering around looking for treasure-hunt clues. The building hummed. Suddenly, an explosion of swearing came from the direction of the computers, where the man with the plastic bag was on the phone to what sounded like offi cialdom. “Fucking do your job !” Curran’s sit still and stare at the wall, if that is what you need to do, without anyone expecting you to buy anything. You can borrow more than just books. Libraries from Newcastle to Portsmouth l oan out Fifa -grade footballs . Cambridgeshire off ers free hearing aid batteries, ferrules for walking sticks and winter coats . Wisbech hosts a food bank, while Brixton lends outfi ts for job inter- views. There are clubs for knitting and coding and gardening, for board games, junk-modelling and stitching. There are breast feeding groups and play-reading groups and choirs. There are autism and bereave- ment caf es. Library premises are hired out for children’s parties, visa processing, life-drawing, NHS health checks and English language les- sons. ( Eighty languages are spoken in just this small area of Reading). Part of the magic of a library, as I was reminded over and over again in the days I spent at Battle during winter and spring, is its capaciousness as social infrastructure. It is very important, Giles said to me that Thursday, that there is “somewhere where everybody can come”. In its disparity of needs and personalities and ages sharing a common space, its tolerance and resilience, the modern library has the potential to feel, as it did on that wintry morning of the quiz, like nothing so much as a big and rackety family. The trouble comes when libraries – and the underpaid, over- stretched people who work in them – start to become sole providers for all these things: when years of cost-cutting mean that the state has eff ectively reneged on all but the most unavoidable of its respon- sibilities to the troubled, the poor, the educationally challenged, the lonely, the physically unwell, the lost or the homeless. “We risk becoming a social care safety net,” said Nick Poole , the outgoing CEO of the library association Cilip , and “our staff are not clinical staff ”. Libraries themselves, of course, have not escaped the fi lleting. About 800, or almost a fi fth, of the UK’s libraries have closed since 2010, while national spend on libraries has dropped by more than 25% . Some are now run by volunteers – but volunteering, said Poole, “really only works where there’s a quantum of free time and suffi cient affl u- ence, and it just doesn’t work where the need is greatest”. These days there is so much need, and not enough help. “And if there is nowhere else to go,” Curran said to me one day, “this is where they’ll come.” Battle library, which sits on a stretch of road that in a single block off ers a veritable United Nations of food options, as well as ‘In my belief, if you start of f with them as children, they are always going to use the library’ eyes fl icked toward the CCTV screens on the main desk, but he did not seem worried. No one else reacted. The man rustled back to the desk and asked Giles, with scrupulous polite ness, for a cup of tea, then walked out of the building carrying it, muttering to himself. “I hope he brings it back,” said Giles, quietly. He did, shortly afterwards. Later, Curran said that he knew the man, and that there was nothing to fear – he just struggled a bit sometimes. The quiz ended with prizes all round : boxes of donated chocolates and biscuits, a lurid bottle of rosé. “Thank you,” said the elderly gentle- man, choosing some Lego for a grandchild. “When’s the next quiz?” There was much about this scene that would have been recognis- able to a library patron 20 years, or indeed 115 years ago, when Battle, after an architectural competition and an injection of cash from the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, became home to Reading’s fi rst dedicated library . But there was much that was entirely new. The average public library is not only a provider of the latest Anne Enright or Julia Donaldson : it is now an informal citizens advice bureau, a business development centre, a community centre and a mental health provider. It is an unoffi cial Sure Start centre, a home- lessness shelter, a literacy and foreign language-learning centre, a calm space where tutors can help struggling kids, an asylum support provider, a citizenship and driving theory test centre , and a place to the Tesco and a pawnbroker , is small enough that you can see most of it from the front desk. Curran, 41, has been manager since 2018. He does, as he puts it, the “manager-ish things” . He is aware he isn’t the most organised, and is grateful for Giles’s handwritten lists, the order she imposes. He’s a “really good manager”, Giles told me one day – while also getting me to promise that I wouldn’t tell him that she’d been saying nice things about him – but “so untidy! I sort of come after him and sweep up afterwards.” THERE IS AN UNFUSSY KINDNESS TO CURRAN. Libraries occasionally have to impose bans for antisocial behaviour, “but you don’t want to ban people”, he told me. “I kind of feel bad for them because it’s often related to something they’re going through.” Giles, 58, who has a softness of demeanour that belies a central steel, is more likely to give the bigger welcome, but also, she’s “a lot tougher than me”, said Curran. “And scarier.” Giles and Curran met 16 years ago, at another branch in Reading. Giles, who grew up in the town and has three children, had already been working there for fi ve years. Curran was 24 and part way through a PhD on Samuel Beckett and BS Johnson . “I thought, ‘I’ll get this job and just read while I’m there.’ And of course it was nothing like that.” Back then, he was “very in himself, nothing like he is now ”,

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 37 said Giles. “I didn’t used to speak to people much,” agreed Curran, who these days is confi dent and approachable, though eye contact is still something he avoids . “I remember getting told to smile : ‘You might be the only person they’ve seen all day.’” They have been friends ever since. Curran eventually abandoned his PhD (“ It wasn’t really for me. I do better with a bit of structure”) and spent a decade performing and recording gothic country music with hip-hop infl ections as an act called 13D. But gradually a thing he was doing while “waiting for something else” became the surpris- ingly satisfying something else. Giles, who is now a grandmother, has been working at Battle library since 2020. “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done,” she said. “I’m so happy working here.” For days I watched as Giles and Curran performed the music of public libraries everywhere. Books requested, books borrowed, books held and returned. As in every library, there was the occa- sional fl amboyantly late book: a Winnie-the-Pooh , recently, that had been borrowed in 1970. And not long ago, a mystery: a spate of strips torn off the bottoms of pages . The culprit was tracked down through borrowing histories and confronted, and had not been back. (“Some sort of nervous thing, maybe,” Curran speculated .) BOVE THIS STEADY BEAT ran the unpredictable melody of questions and comments and requests. May I join the library? I’ve lost my card. I’ve come to fi x the blinds. Can I print something? How do I do it? Do you have a number for Reading Museum? Can you turn the heating off ? Can you turn it on? Do you do passports? Most days, there was someone there the minute they opened. Once it was a man in sports kit who literally sprinted for the new Lee Child. Another day it was a mumbled request for sanitary products. (A charity called All Yours distributes them free through libraries and community centres in south-east England.) And beyond all this, in a descant of care and ingenuity, Curran and Giles were planning activities and making displays. Displays are their speciality , and they are gorgeously, wittily constructed. On my visits, I saw a snowy crime scene, complete with tiny clapboard house, police tape and bloody footprints built to top a selection of Scandinavian thrillers (Curran) and opposite it a tree shivering with delicate gold stars (Giles). At Christmas, Giles made a red postbox, and they encouraged children to write Santa letters – to which Curran wrote individual replies in beautiful calligraphy. In the spring, Giles built a Formula One racing track that wound around the children’s library. And in the main library, nestled among the hardbacks, are the book nooks Curran made when, during lockdown, he found himself in charge of an empty library: small 3D reconstructions of scenes from novels. There’s a prize for guessing all the stories represented, but no one has yet won it. It’s all extremely inviting – and that isn’t even to mention the children’s section. When, about 16 years ago, Battle’s then-manager, Marjorie McClure , won a National Lottery grant, she spent part of it on creating a cosy space for children to play and curl up in with a book. Parked in the centre of the high-ceilinged space, in front of the tall, bright windows, is a maroon-and-yellow wagon. Inside are low cushioned benches, and under the benches small cupboards; the windows have red gingham curtains. McClure also commissioned murals, and a small amphitheatre for story times. To this, Giles and Curran have added a handmade ferris wheel and detailed attention to every possible corner a child might look into . When schools visit, Curran and Giles let the children use the old-fashioned library stamp- ing machine, tell them about the board games, the treasure hunts, the crafts – all while repeating that it’s free, it’s free, it’s free. Some parts of Reading are well-heeled, but not this. Anything for which other branches might charge £1, Battle does not, � Speaking volumes Amanda Giles behind the desk at Battle library. ‘It’s the best thing I’ve ever done,’ she said. ‘I’m so happy working here’ � Fully booked Battle library on Reading’s Oxford Road. Most days there is someone waiting to be let in as soon as it opens, say the staff � A tale well told Helped by National Lottery funding, the children’s section at Battle offers imaginative and inviting spaces in which to read �

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 38 seeker at the printer, and what came out, as evidence requested by the authorities, was a picture of the man’s face smashed in. On an average day, Giles and Curran spend nearly as much time setting people up on computers, helping them print, then using an old-fashioned ping-and-clang cash register to charge them for print- ing, as they do issuing books. Some users are not confi dent with the technology, but for others there is a deeper problem. “Semi-literacy is a thing around here,” said Curran, “ Obviously they don’t want to say, but a lot of the time it will be that they just can’t navigate.” LIBRARY ASSISTANTS AREN’T REQUIRED TO HELP, but “the thing is they’re obviously struggling”, said Giles, so she and Curran almost always do. Much of the help required is urgent – job applications, benefi ts forms, case letters. “I mean, the amount of times I’ve had to go through forms with people, trying to quickly understand their C100 [for child custody arrangements] or any form like that,” said Curran. Universal credit comes up again and again. “Even I fi nd that stressful,” Curran told me. Immigration documents are even more arduous , and Giles and Curran often assist asylum-seekers housed at a hotel just down the road. These recent arrivals need just one Home Offi ce letter, the sinisterly named Bail 201 , rather than the usual signed ID and proof of address, Lenders of last resort � Time to rhyme Young children enjoy a workshop at the library whose staff organise a variety of free clubs, competitions and activities � Double act Library manager Terry Curran with Amanda Giles. The pair, who met 16 years ago, work closely together and have become friends because otherwise no one would come. Among all the wit and play and invention, their display of books intended to help manage the cost of living was striking for its plainness. “In my belief,” Giles said, “if you start off with them as children, they’re always going to use the library.” And they begin as early as they can. For four hours every Tuesday, mothers bring new babies for their government health visitor check ups. They are asked to wait for their appointments in the children’s library. Many know it already, but others have never noticed its existence, or been in before. “I was surprised,” a local woman named Natalia Duca said to me, one rainy Tuesday. “I didn’t realise it was so nice! ” Curran and Giles are always trying new things. When a recent report on the parlous state of the British library system was published , the thing that jumped out at Curran was the libraries that lent footballs. He wanted to do that. He had already applied for funding to run a Lego club. Reading Borough Council provides about £70 ($90) a year for the craft supplies Curran and Giles use in weekly clubs. Everything else they go shopping for together, with their own money, in their free time, or order online. (It’s worth noting, here, that library assistant jobs start at around £23,500 .) Curran, who often worked on displays on days off , had a reputation among his colleagues for never being ill, and hardly ever taking leave. And this was only what was visible on the surface. Poole described what he called “slow librarianship” – the process of coming to under- stand a specifi c community . Watching the front desk will show you busy people, said Poole, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. “What you won’t necessarily see is the care they’ve taken over the preceding six years, to make sure that when somebody walks in and says, ‘I’m trying to learn about this,’ or, ‘Have you got any books in Chinese?’ we can say, ‘Yes,’ and it’s the right thing .” ANY VISITORS I SAW took it all for granted, but many did not. Like the man who came in and said in a low, apologetic voice : “Please, I’m a student ; I’d like to come in to study” – and within 10 minutes had been issued with a library card and was at a desk. “He was quite surprised you didn’t have to pay,” said Curran. This was a familiar reaction. One father, whose child had picked up an outline of an alligator in the children’s library and coloured it in, came to the desk to ask : “Please can he take this away?” Yes, of course, said Giles. “Thank you. You’re great!” said the dad. Library workers, especially in the smaller branch libraries, know their regulars, and if they work there long-term , they see these regulars at diff erent stages in their lives, often in private ways others might not. Non-fi ction loans, especially, can be revealing. The fi ve books on witchcraft taken out at once, for instance; or the man who came off a building site every afternoon and, still in dusty hi-vis, read art history for an hour or two before going home. Curran recalled one man who wanted to know all about horses: “I’m seeing this girl, right,” said Curran – putting on a streetwise accent – “and she’s keen on horses, and I’d like to be able to talk to her about them.” They also sense when things have gone awry. The home service – two full-time staff who deliver and collect books from those who can’t easily leave home – notice if someone seem s unwell, or a house too cold. Curran ha s sat next to people at a screen – usually men – who ha ve said to him : “I don’t feel like being here any more.” He would give them a number for social services, but they were usually reluctant to call. “You just know, don’t you, that look of depression” – his hands mimed blankness across his face. The other day, he said, he got chat- ting to someone whose electricity meter had run out. “They were just sitting in the dark eating cold beans for a couple of weeks until they got paid.” On another occasion, Curran was standing with an asylum-

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 39 to get a library card. And with a library card, they suddenly have “all sorts of access”, said Curran. “To the internet, to printing – stuff that would cost a lot if you had to pay. And we’ll help you there and then, if we can. You don’t have to make an appointment. I like to think that [here at least] they see nice people. People who want to help them.” Social trends reported in the media are not news to library staff , as Simon Smith , the thoughtful, soft-spoken man who manages Read- ing’s libraries and museums, told me . We had started talking in the local history section of Reading Central library, but had been vigor- ously shushed by a patron and retreated to the messy back rooms. For instance, all of the staff were “acutely conscious”, said Smith, of the issues that were beginning to be thrown up by the pandemic. “A lot of people were really angry,” Curran told me. “But it was just people who had been suff ering for ages – people with mental health problems who’d basically been locked in their house. Can you imagine? And there was nothing open. So they just came to somewhere that was open. A lot of people were just crying.” He turned to Giles. “Did you do the front door at Reading?” “Yeah,” she replied, with feeling. At Battle, and Central – “where there’s a lot of sleeping in corners”, said Curran – they were tolerant of anyone who wanted to come in for a nap, though the toilets are locked half an hour before closing, partly because of a homeless patron who used to come in for a wash. It would have been fi ne if he’d done it before they closed, said Curran. “It was just that we had to stand there waiting for 20 minutes.” Smith mentioned an informal policy of “empathy with a bit behind it”: not prying, but asking open questions, then directing the patron to resources that might help. “If someone says, ‘The boiler’s broken, ’ that can mean the boiler is broken. Or it can mean, ‘ I can’t [manage].’” Reading Central library was such a proud step on the road to the 21st century that when it opened, in 1985 , it occasioned its own souve- nir guide. Today, it looks tired. The ceilings are low, making the space dark and oppressive. The fi rst time I visited, late on a rainy December day, I had just come from Battle, and the contrast was depressing. It was the 115-year-old light-fi lled building that felt modern, and infi nitely more welcoming. Next year , Reading Central, with the help of £8.6m in government funding, is moving to the Civic Offi ces less than half a mile away. The current building will be turned into fl ats . Early one Saturday in February I returned to Central, as Curran, had become a repository for human waste, rubbish and used needles. “I got a needle stuck in my arm once,” said Williams, a grizzled man of 67. “That was six months of tests.” The amphitheatre is overlooked by a wide window in the fi ction section, which used to be a ring side seat from which to watch people shooting up below. The bamboo has now been cut back, some railings added, and an access blocked, so there is now far less antisocial behaviour. Giles and Curran seemed markedly less relaxed at Central. “I like it better at Battle,” Curran said. “Here, I’m waiting for something terrible to happen.” As manager, Smith had been called to toilets with blood spattered up the walls, or an unconscious person with a needle hang- ing out of them. It wasn’t that Battle didn’t have incidents. People got upset and could be aggressive. Once or twice a year someone using the toilet “will smoke crack and set off the fi re alarm”, said Curran. ATTLE HAD TWO PANIC BUTTONS, which they’d not yet had to use, whereas Central has about fi ve or six incidents a month – though, to put it in con- text, that’s out of about 11,000 visits in the same period. “You get a feel for when something’s about to kick off ,” said Williams, part of whose job was to pace the fl oors, keeping the peace, linked by radio to local security offi cers in case he needed backup. But when Williams says that “a library should be a safe space for everyone”, he means it. Even the drunk person who just wants to put their head down on the table, or the addict coming down off a high. “They need to feel safe too,” he told me. Do you ever feel intimidated , I asked Giles one day. “Yeah – occasionally,” she said. Libraries have a largely female workforce . There is a policy at Central that no one should work alone, but female staff can still feel vulnerable. That Saturday, lunchtime was a chal- lenge. Staff had 15 minutes, but Curran was struggling to give everyone a break while making sure no one was on a desk alone. Eventually he solved it by getting less than fi ve minutes himself – which he used to make Giles a cup of tea. They passed each other in front of visas and Curran gave Giles a shoulder bump. Giles rolled her eyes, tolerantly, at me. She had a cold she could not shake, but had gone into work anyway. “I wish people knew,” Giles had said to me one day , “just ‘I wish people knew just how much ef fort library staﬀ put in. We’d like it to mean more to them’ who manages it once a month, and the caretaker, David Williams, were opening up. Owing to illness and school holidays, they were more short-staff ed than usual, and Curran would have to man the fi rst fl oor on his own. A cleaner was doing her rounds, and the library smelled of bleach. Giles arrived about an hour later, though her work today would be diff erent. Since 2018, a company that processes visa applications for the Home Offi ce has paid to use a corner of Central, and it employs library assistants who have signed the Offi cial Secrets Act as process- ing staff . Giles would spend the rest of the day in a specially roped-off area, checking documents, scanning them if necessary (for which visa applicants are charged an extortionate £56, regardless of the number of sheets), taking passport photos and recording biometric data. People came from across the country to be processed. Often, it was “everything to them”, Giles and her colleague told me. They often saw people’s hands shaking when they took fi ngerprints. The fi ve-fi gure sums the visa service brought in yearly have had a major impact on Reading libraries: no more redundancies, open- ing hours stabilised, no more branches at risk of closure. Smith was able to commission urgent works to the central building – which, in an excess of mid-80s idealism, included a small amphitheatre just outside, where stands of bamboo, probably rather lovely when new, how much eff ort we put in. I think we would like it to mean more to people.” It’s a point that comes up among library staff again and again. At Battle, just before Christmas, I watched as Curran and Giles began to wind down for the day. It was dark and rainy. Children careered through the rooms, looking for hidden Christmas crackers. Six-year- old James was off ering his services. “Need any help? I’ve already done it twice.” Giles and Curran were discussing the order of carols for their fi nal rhyme time of the year, singing snatches of them together. “People complain we’re turning the library into a creche,” Curran said , “but I love the sound of children’s laughter, people having fun, especially when it’s something we’ve organised. When it’s busy and there are families everywhere, that’s when it’s the best.” A toddler bowled through fi ction, shrieking with delight. The mother covered her mouth in horror, but no one else reacted. A small girl with a high ponytail came to see Giles at the desk. “Can I take this book out, please?” said her mother, coaching her. “Can I take this book out, please?” echoed the child. “Of course,” said Giles. The girl looked thrilled. “You need to look after the book, OK?” said her mother. “You need to look after it very well.” • AIDA EDEMARIAM IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE GUARDIAN’S LONG READS SERIES

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 42 On your marks, get set, dope! T’S SUMMER 2025. A large athletics stadium somewhere in Europe buzzes with crowds of peo- ple . Down on the track, eight men line up for the 100m fi nal. Eight men pumped full of performance - enhancing drugs. Up in the control room, director Ridley Scott is asking for closeups on their faces. One of these men is about to obliterate Usain Bolt’s 100m world record, which has stood for more than 15 years . Perhaps they all are. It’s certainly possible: just the day before, a host of men ran the mara- thon in under two hours. The world record for the mile, which has stood for more than a quarter of a century , has just been beaten by a guy with bionic implants in his legs. Out in the centre fi eld, a javelin thrower wearing AI glasses with real-time decision support has secured another world record. The feats of the previous year’s Paris Olympics are long forgotten amid this celebration of human achievement. “It promises to be one of the most compelling television events of all time,” says Aron D’Souza , the man behind the Enhanced Games. His idea is an alternative to the Olympic s where performance -enhancing drugs (PEDs), and even technological enhancements, are not banned but actively encouraged. It will be a battle of the biohacked. It may sound like a crazy idea that will never get off the ground, but D’Souza has signed a deal with Scott to make a 10-part series about the fi rst Enhanced Games. He has the full backing of billionaire investors Peter Thiel and Christian Angermayer . He has former world champion swimmer James Magnussen signed up and, he assures me, interest from at least six world record holders. “The Enhanced Games are inevitable,” he says. I’ve come to meet D’Souza and talk through his vision at his offi ces in a private members’ club in Kensington, London. When he appears , D’Souza says he’s going to record our conversation, just in case my recording doesn’t work. I guess he’s used to being careful. After all , his plan hasn’t exactly been welcomed by the world . Writing in the Guardian, Barney Ronay called it “grotesque” . The World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) described it as “dangerous and irresponsible”, while the head of World Athletics, Sebastian Coe , declared: “It’s bollocks .” Do these criticisms get him down? He smiles calmly . He has well - polished answers ready to go. “If we woke up tomorrow and there was a mountain just one foot taller than Everest,” he says, “many would say it’s impossible to climb; some would say it’s too dangerous. The people who sell tickets on the old Everest would say it’s unethical. But every mountaineer would look up. And when it was achieved, we would have been taught something new about our humanity.” D’SOUZA HAS REAMS OF THIS LOFTY STUFF. “In 1896, Baron Pierre de Coubertin reinvented the ancient Olympics for his era, an era of nationalism,” he says. “Now we’re reinventing the Olympics again … to create a whole new formula, not of sports, but of humanity.” The Enhanced Games will focus initially on track and fi eld, swimming, weightlifting, combat and gymnastics. But D’Souza sees the games not merely as a sporting event, but as a “scientifi c journey”. “Why should we accept the limits of our humanity?” he says. “The quest of the human project has always been to overcome those .” He goes on to compare the games with the moon landing, with Christo- pher Columbus discovering the new world. “These were powerful scientifi c explorations that helped unify all of humanity.” I ask how athletes taking drugs is supposed to unify humanity, when so far it has seems to have caused only rifts and divisions . “The journey of discovery is a hard one,” he says. “I think about when the radio was fi rst invented, even the printed book, the upheaval that Gutenberg brought to the world. Without Gutenberg there would be no Martin Luther, without Luther there’d be no Protestantism.” The spiel continues: “ The traditional media loves to lambast social media as being dangerous; it’s also because traditional media fears loss of its revenue streams. And this is always the challenge of technologi- cal transition. For example, the factories and the move to industrial economies was very scary, and we’re seeing it with AI now. In our case, performance enhancements hold great promise for our society. The same compounds that allow athletes to be faster and stronger will also make our population younger. “Imagine if a 60-year-old was breaking Usain Bolt’s world record. That would force us to think about what it means to retire at 65. It would be one of the most powerful social signifi ers in history .” If the Enhanced Games are even half as impactful as he envisages, there is going to be a lot of money to be made. Indeed, streamers have been making multimillion -dollar off ers for the rights, D’Souza says. “Every major broadcaster in the world has approached us . If I went to the streamers today, they would give me $20m or $30m a year for where the idea is at now, but in a few months, when we announce the athletes and confi rm we really will break world records, it’s probably worth $100m a year. But the Olympic rights are worth $4bn , so why would I undersell it?” D’Souza is a lawyer and successful entrepreneur who helped mastermind a lawsuit, secretly funded by Pay Pal billionaire Peter Thiel , against news media organisation Gawker , which led to its bankruptcy in 2016 . Thiel is himself a divisive fi gure who has supported rightwing groups and donated huge amounts to Republican presidential candidates in the US, including Donald Trump . He also has a big interest, and a lot of investment, in anti- ageing technologies. “There’s $4bn of revenue that comes into the Olympics per cycle,” says D’Souza . “And all of that is wasted on stadium building. What if it went into scientifi c research and development? Because when we break the 100m world record in the fi rst Enhanced Games, everyone is going to say, ‘ What is he on and how do I get it? ’” When I ask if he ’ll have an investment in these “enhancements”, ‘We’re reinventing the Olympics to create a whole new formula, not of sports, but of humanity’ � Games master Entrepreneur Aron D’Souza, the man behind the Enhanced Games SUKI DHANDA

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 43 tested to check the ir health . He also says that doping is self-limiting, as it will help your performance only if you are already in good shape. “If you took steroids today, you’ d feel a bit diff erent, but if you don’t exercise, you’ll just get fat,” he says. “Think about bodybuild- ing. Arnold Schwarzenegger took copious amounts of steroids, but he always ma de it clear they were only the cherry on top. There was grit, determination, hard work , then a bit of enhancement.” In a n interview last year, Schwarzenegger was more reticent about his past use of PEDs. “Don’t go there,” he said. “I want young people to know I have seen people getting kidney transplants and suff ering tremendously from [steroid use].” SO FAR, DESPITE THE OFFER OF $100,000 each to 10 athletes picked to star in Scott’s documen- tary series, the Enhanced Games still has only one confi rmed competitor : Magnussen. At his peak, Magnussen was one of the best swimmers in the world , winning the 100 m freestyle world title in 2011 and 2013 . He achieved the fastest swim in history in the 2011 100 m freestyle wearing the controversial polyurethane suits that were common at the time but which have since been banned. Magnussen retired from competitive swimming in 2019 . I speak to him over Zoom from his home in Sydney, Australia. He seems a little bored at fi rst, a little weary, as though he already knows what I’m going to ask . I start with the health risks. Does he have any concerns about embarking on a course of PEDs? “I’m not worried,” he says. “That’s fear mongering. It’ ll all be prescribed by doctors.” He will be “super stringent, methodical, retesting my biomarkers � he doesn’t fl inch. “Absolutely,” he says. “I love these products, I use them myself. I want to compete at the fi rst games, at 38 years old.” Money, glory, eternal youth … I can see more than a few reasons why a self-made millionaire entrepreneur may be pushing this project, besides uniting humanity. But doping in sport is banned for one key reason: it’s a health risk. Drug testing was introduced at the Olympics in response to the death of Danish cyclist Knud Jensen , who collapsed during the Rome Games in 1960 ( the exact cause was contested , but years later it was revealed there were amphetamines in his system ). Head of the Australian Sports Commission and former Olympic swimming champion Kieren Perkins has been forthright on this, saying : “The idea of an Enhanced Games is laughable. Someone will die if we allow that sort of environment to continue to fl ourish.” D’Souza is unmoved. “Kieren Perkins earns as much money as the prime minister of Australia,” he says. “ He’s the ticket seller on the old Everest.” He pulls out a folder with lists of charts and research showing that the most dangerous drug in the world is alcohol, while right at the bottom of the list, he says, are anabolic steroids. He also references anonymous polling on athletes at the World Athletics Championships 2011 in which 44% of competitors said they had used PEDs. This adds weight to the argume nt that they won’t kill anyone, but it also suggests that world records won’t be broken that easily if so many athletes are already doping. It also raises another question: if secret doping is rife, would the Enhanced Games more honestly level the playing fi eld? The concern is that, with all restrictions removed, people might dope in much higher quantities. And that’s when it could become really dangerous. D’Souza insists this won’t happen, saying everything will be administered by doctors and the athletes will be regularly � Deep water Swimmer James Magnussen has signed up for the Enhanced Games DANIEL BOUD

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 44 from start to fi nish to make sure there are no ill -eff ects, changing things if anything is reacting poorly with my health, organs, fertility.” That doesn’t make it sound completely risk free. I ask why he signed up . As the only declared athlete in the Enhanced Games, his reputa- tion is on the line, too. Is it just the money? As well as the $100,000 to appear in the documentary series, he will earn $1m if he can break a world record, which he is convinced he will. “Money is part of it,” he says. “But there’s more to it. Every athlete has regrets, things they could have done diff erently, moments of poor preparation or performance, and with hindsight we all wish we could put this head, all the wisdom, knowledge, calmness that comes with age, on a younger body. I’m essentially doing that: my head on my 20-year-old body, the two combined for the ultimate performance.” Does the negativity around the Enhanced Games make him wish he hadn’t signed up? “There are going to be agendas from diff erent parts of the media,” he says, weighing his words carefully. “I work in the media and I understand why they’re coming after me. It doesn’t faze me.” Unlike the media, he says, people in the street, friends and especially other athletes, including former teammates, have all been “very positive”. He says they understand, like he does, that sport is really just entertainment and that whatever people think about all this, everyone is going to want to watch the Enhanced Games. “Even the haters,” he says with a wry smile. Despite an announcement that between 50 and 100 athletes competing in the Paris Olympics were in the process of registering to compete in the Enhanced Games , not a single other athlete has made any public show of interest, let alone a public commitment to the event. Even with the promise of anonymity, no other athlete was willing to talk to me. A side from the lack of competitors, the Enhanced Games is an untested concept that could fall short in other ways. For a start, will anyone, let alone a 60-year-old, as D’Souza suggested, really be able to run as fast as Bolt, even loaded up on PEDs? One track and fi eld agent (who didn’t want to be named) with at least three current British Olympic athletes on his books says the idea is laughable. “From what I’ve seen, this whole Enhanced Games is so non-credible as to beggar belief,” he says. “Anyone with any understanding of sport knows you can’t just chuck PEDs at someone and make them into a world-class athlete.” HE ENHANCED GAMES put forward Dr Michael Sagner from King’s College London to answer my technical ques- tions and I’m fully expecting him to toe the party line. But when I ask him if a 60-year-old could ever run faster than Bolt, he splutters. “His tendons would snap,” he says, as though the suggestion is preposterous. As for Magnussen’s vision of having his experienced, older head on his younger body, Sagner says : “ You can’t go back to your 20-year-old body. No drugs can do that.” On the issue of safety and the monitoring of athletes’ doping regimes , sports science writer and author Alex Hutchinson says the Enhanced Games organisers are being “stunningly na ive” if they think athletes won’t push the limits of what is safe. “People dope because they want to get an edge over their competitors,” he says. “Now move the starting blocks so that everyone is doping. How do you get an edge? By doping more.” In a statement, Wada expressed concern about the idea of safe doping: “It would be diffi cult, if not impossible, to monitor athletes for all possible acute and chronic medical problems from taking PEDs. There is also the issue of young, unmonitored athletes who will be incited to abuse PEDs as they aspire to make the Enhanced Games. The whole thing is a dreadful idea.” The list of possible ill-eff ects from com- mon PEDs includes liver damage, high blood pressure and heart failure. Hutchinson is particularly worried about the wider implications of the Enhanced Games for grassroots sports. “ As a parent, I hate the idea that my kids will sooner or later have to consider their drugs regimen if they want to have a shot at moving on to the next level,” he says. “Sport is a continuum. Don’t kid yourself that you can normalise drug use at the top levels without it trickling down .” Unsurprisingly, D’Souza doesn’t see any problem with PEDs in amateur sport, but rather sees the ban on them as antiquated. “I’ve learned that so many of the products I use as just an everyday weekend warrior athlete are banned,” he says. “So in cycling, my favourite sport, if you get an intravenous IV drip of more than 100ml in 12 hours , you get banned. And every time I get off an international fl ight, I go to Har- rods, I get an IV drip, it’s fabulous, it’s the best way to get over jet lag .” When I push him, it turns out he’s not actually a big user of PEDs . “I haven’t used anabolic steroids yet,” he says. “I use some pre-workout stimulants that are banned. I’m interested in going on testosterone, but I haven’t tried EPO [a blood-boosting drug]. It’s a time limitation thing.” Coe may have dismissed the Enhanced Games out of hand, but he recently announced $50,000 prize money for each gold medal winner in the athletics at the Paris Olympics. He denies the move has anything to do with the sums being waved around by the Enhanced Games, yet D’Souza is off ering more just to compete . If the Enhanced Games turns out to be even half as popular as D’Souza hopes , you have to wonder where that will leave the rest of sport . D’Souza loves to talk about unifying humanity, but won’t he be splitting the sporting world in two if his vision comes to pass? “I think the two [the Enhanced Games and the Olympics] can coexist peacefully,” he says. However you look at it, the Enhanced Games is coming. If nothing else, we may fi nally learn how much of a diff erence PEDs make to an athlete’s performance. Perhaps the best hope for those of us who cling to the ideals of “natural sport” is that the drugs don’t work after all • ADHARANAND FINN IS A WRITER AND AUTHOR MARTINA LANG On your marks, get set, dope! ‘You can’t just chuck performance -enhancing drugs at someone and make them world-class’

Opinion The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 46 f the polls were right, the UK is about to return to normal politics. After 14 years of Tory corruption and misrule, a Labour government would put this country back on track. Justice and decency will resume, public services will be rebuilt, our global standing will be restored , we will revert to a familiar state. Or so the story goes. What is the “normal” envisaged by pundits and politicians of the left and centre? It is the most anomalous politics in the history of the world. Consciously or otherwise, they hark back to a remarkable period, roughly 1945 to 1975, in which, in certain rich nations, wealth and power were distributed, almost everyone could aspire to decent housing, wages and conditions, public services were ambitious and well-funded and a robust economic safety net prevented destitution. There had never been a period like it in the prior history of the world, and there has not been one since. Even during that period, general prosperity in the rich nations was supported by extreme exploitation, coups and violence imposed on the poor nations. We lived in a bubble, limited in time and space, in which extraordinary things happened. Yet somehow we think of it as normal. Those “normal” politics were the result of something known to economic historians as the “great compression” : a drastic reduction in inequality caused by two world wars. In many powerful countries, a combination of the physical destruction of assets, the loss of colonial and overseas possessions, infl ation, very high taxes, wage and price controls, requisitioning and nationalisation required by the wartime economy, as well as the eff ects of rising democracy and labour organisation, greatly reduced the income and assets of the rich. It also greatly improved, once the wars had ended, the position of the poor. For several decades, we benefi ted from the aftermath of these great shocks. Now the eff ect has faded. We are returning to true “normality”. The history of many centuries, including our own, shows that the default state of politics is not redistribution and general welfare, but a spiral of accumulation by the very rich . Normal is a society in which might is right. Normal is oligarchy. In his magisterial book The Great Leveler , published in 2017 , the historian Walter Scheidel explains that only four forces have ever signifi cantly reversed inequality: mass-mobilisation warfare (such as the two world wars), total and violent revolution, state collapse and devastating plagues. Decisions, decisions. He shows how warfare economies have been turned into welfare economies, sometimes by force. For example, following the defeat of Japan, the US occupation government , led by Gen Douglas MacArthur, sought what it called “the democratization of Japanese economic institutions” to ensure “ a wide distribution of income and ownership of the means of production and trade ”. To this end, it imposed high property taxes ; demanded a labour union law enabling the right to organise and strike ; and organised comprehensive land reform . These programmes resulted in the near-total destruction of income from capital and the creation in Japan of a political and economic democracy, almost from scratch. All the major combatants were similarly transformed. In the US, the top rate of estate (inheritance) tax rose to 71% in 1941, and income tax to 94% in 1944 . The National War Labo r Board raised workers’ pay while holding down executive pay. Union membership soared. In the UK, the top rate of income tax was held at 98% from 1941 to 1952 . It took decades to decline to current levels. The share of incomes captured by the richest 0.1% fell from 7% in 1937 to just over 1% in 1975. In the absence of one of the four great catastrophes, income and capital inexorably accumulate in the hands of the few, and oligarchy returns. Oligarchs are people who translate their inordinate economic power into inordinate political power. They build a politics that suits them. Scheidel shows that as inequality rises, so does polarisation and political dysfunction, both of which favour the very rich, as a competent, proactive state is a threat to their interests. Dysfunction is what the Tories delivered in the UK and what Donald Trump promises in the US. Oligarchs seek the destruction of oversight, which is why UK regulators such as the Environment Agency have been gutted. The same desire was the driving force behind Brexit. They want to halt protest . They get what they want, distorting national life. They pour money into neoliberal and far-right political movements , which help capital to solve its perennial problem: democracy. The arc of history bends towards injustice. But every so often it is broken over the knee of catastrophe. If you want a return to the rich nations’ “normality” of 1945 to 1975 – to redistribution, a shared sense of national purpose, robust public services and a strong economic safety net, high employment and good wages – and I think most people would, you need a politics that is not just abnormal, but unprecedented. We would need to do what the world wars did, without the violence and physical destruction: a peacetime MacArthur programme for overthrowing the oligarchs. Political parties would need to overcome their fear of economic power: of the newspaper barons, the property developers, the fossil fuel companies, hedge funds and assorted oligarchs . If we want even a modicum of democracy, equality, fairness and a functioning state, we need not the accommodation with economic power that Keir Starmer seeks, but the mother of all battles with it • Oligarchs are people who translate their inordinate economic power into inordinate political power � George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 47 ingle people are often seen as living half a life. We’re just incomplete puzzles, desperately searching for the missing piece to make us whole. But what if the risk is not what we’ll miss out on if we don’t centre our lives around a romantic partner, but what we’ll miss out on if we do? For millions of people, being single is the key to living their best life. They are what Dr Bella DePaulo calls the “single at heart”, and when I fi rst heard that term, I knew she was talking about me. After po ring over survey data from more than 20,000 people across 100 countries, De Paulo found that – contrary to cultural assumptions that the unpartnered will die miserable and alone, surrounded by cats – those who embrace their single status actually grow happier as they age. The “single at heart” are thriving because of their solo status, not in spite of it. As a single, child-free woman, this is my experience. There is freedom in knowing you’re following your own path, not one dictated by rigid social norms. I feel more at peace with myself at 48 than I ever have, and I’ve forged deep connections with people outside the traditional notions of “family”. Far from feeling like a lesser path, my life feels expansive. It’s not a narrative we hear often. From reality TV dating shows to Hollywood romcoms and Taylor Swift lyrics, marriage and motherhood are sold as the fairytale ending, and growing old alone the worst possible fate. It can be hard to imagine a diff erent path when there are so few positive representations of single life. When I heard De Paulo’s story – she’s 70, has never married, never lived with a partner, and is as happy and grounded as anyone you’ll meet – I saw a future that affi rmed my choices. She’s one of many single people I interviewed for my podcast, Well Enough Alone: A Guide To Thriving Solo , who have redefi ned what it means to be alone. What I found fascinating about these conversations is the common thread running through them. People talked of the fulfi lment and joyful defi ance they feel about refusing to be caged by societal expectations. There are more people living alone today than at any point in human history. In Australia, one in four (26%) homes are single households. In the US it’s nearly 30% and in parts of Sweden, close to half of the population lives alone. For some this may not be the life they planned but, for many, being single is an active choice. Research from the Survey Center on American Life found that 53% of unpartnered gen Z and 59% of single millennials were not dating because they preferred being single to being in a relationship, rising to 64% of Gen X and 73% of baby boomers. Marriage rates continue to decline, “grey divorce” is on the rise and in 25 countries there are more single households than nuclear families. We’re witnessing a seismic shift in the way we live but society is still structured around the premise that being partnered and having kids is the premium life path and you’ll be rewarded for following it. Politicians focus budgets on incentives for “working families” while an unspoken “singles tax” sees people on one income often paying more for insurance, travel, household bills and other living expenses. Perhaps if single status was not viewed as something every unpartnered person wants to change, we would see greater equity for those doing life solo. Instead there is a backlash against women rejecting the narrow path they were told was their natural imperative. But as the writer Glynnis MacNicol observes , there is no holding back this turning tide as more women fi nd fulfi l ment their own way: “It’s not just in enjoying my age that I’m defying expectations. It’s that I’ve exempted myself from the central things we’re told give a woman’s life meaning – partnership and parenting. I’ve discovered that despite all the warnings, I regret none of those choices.” When people warn that I’ll be lonely when I’m older, I say that having a partner or kids won’t necessarily insulate you against loneliness. The loneliest I’ve ever felt was in a relationship that was crushing my spirit. What I’ve learned from embracing solitude is that being single is not a problem that needs to be fi xed. When you stop searching for “the one” to “complete” you, there is room to cultivate the most important relationship of all – the one you have with yourself • Relish the freedom: being single is a joyful deﬁ ance of convention Jill Stark � Jill Stark is a Melbourne- based author and mental health advocate S O C I E T Y LOLOSTOCK/GETTY / ISTOCKPHOTO

Opinion The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 48 Whether a journalist or not, Assange changed journalism for ever Margaret Simons he two most consequential Australians in history are surely Rupert Murdoch and Julian Assange. Unsurprisingly, they have both have gained their notoriety through journalism and the media. More surprising – but signifi cant – is the fact both Murdoch and Assange could be described as libertarians. Assange emerged from the free software, cypherpunk movement of the 1990s . When he founded WikiLeaks, he argued it would pressure “unaccountable and secretive institutions … to act ethically”. He embraced the idea the state – at least the surveillance state – could not survive mass-scale “principled leaking”. He was an anarchist. Murdoch, on the other hand, began as a “zealous Laborite” according to his father, Keith. He soon dropped his socialist ideas but remained anti- establishment. In 1999, he told journalist William Shawcross that he identifi ed as a libertarian. Though he added: “I’m not saying it should be taken to the absolute limit.” Libertarian, then, but not an anarchist. Perhaps that diff erence is why Murdoch has become part of the establishment and a king-maker within it, whereas Assange is a convicted felon and has spent fi ve years in jail. Some of the discussion about Assange’s guilty plea concerns the question of whether or not he is a journalist. Assange registered the domain name for WikiLeaks in 2006 – the same year Twitter was invented, and Facebook opened itself for the public to use. There was a raging debate, back then, about “bloggers v journalists”, with the media professionals asserting that bloggers could not be relied upon to behave responsibly. Meanwhile, some bloggers questioned whether journalists were needed at all in the new era of “citizen journalism” and crowd-sourced information. How things have changed. Today, blogging has been co-opted by the mainstream media as a way of M E DI A JON ELSWICK/AP; ANTONIO OLMOS

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly preserving its place at the centre of public conversation. Yet professional journalism has not become redundant. Assange realised that if he wanted impact and credibility, he needed the mainstream media. He collaborated with several large media outlets, including this one, and fell out with most of them. One of the main points of contention was the issue of redaction. WikiLeaks didn’t believe in editing. As the then investigations editor of the Guardian, David Leigh, has recalled : “We were starting from: ‘Here’s a document. How much of it shall we print?’ Whereas Julian’s ideology was: ‘I shall dump everything out and then you have to try to persuade me to cross a few things out.’ ” The phenomenon of the mass data dump began with WikiLeaks. Since then we have had the Paradise Papers , the revelations of Edward Snowden , and many more. WikiLeaks’ publication of diplomatic cables changed our knowledge of how the world works. It accelerated the political changes of the Arab spring. Other leaks revealed details of extrajudicial killings in Kenya, China’s repression of dissidents, and fi nancial corruption in the US and Peru. But by publishing Democratic party emails hacked by the Russian intelligence agencies, Assange arguably assisted the election of Donald Trump. Which brings us back to Murdoch. His Fox News promoted Trump, then peddled the lie that the 2020 election had been stolen. That helped to incite the Capitol riots and a crisis in US democracy that may yet make the country ungovernable. What Assange had not foreseen was that lies, conspiracy theories and misinformation would ride the free internet at least as easily as truth and transparency. And so to our own time, when the main conversation about the internet is not about freedom, but rather regulation and censorship. Limiting social media use for people over the age of 16 is apparently bipartisan policy in Australia. It seems that we are prepared to trade at least some aspects of freedom of speech in return for civility. Or niceness. Or safety. Or something. Meanwhile, the professional news media, largely behind paywalls, is in a sense no longer “mass ” media. Only 21% of Australians pay to access news. Consumption of professional journalism in Australia correlates well with political understanding, research shows, but it is increasingly something done by the elite. The latest Digital News Report , released last month, shows that almost half of Australians use social media to access news, up by 4% from last year. For nearly two- thirds of gen Z, social media is the main news source. Assange once wrote that “truth” would make “people free to choose their path, free to remove the ring from their noses, free to look up into the infi nite void and choose wonder ”. But rather than sow the seeds of a new enlightenment, we may have created a new dark age in which we can’t tell what is true, and what is myth � W hile Benjamin Netanyahu picks fi ghts at home and abroad, he is more closely tied than ever to the worst parts of the domestic political realm. Last month, Israel’s prime minister laid into its chief ally, the US , which has reproved him but done little to stop the war in Gaza, or avert the looming confl ict with Hezbollah. Last Monday, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, labelled António Guterres an “accomplice to terror” and alleged his sole aim had been “to help Hamas survive this war”, after the secretary- general accused Israel (without directly naming it) of spreading misinformation about him. Yet Mr Netanyahu will go to any lengths to keep his far-right coalition partners in the fold. He granted political legitimacy to the Otzma Yehudit party of Itamar Ben- Gvir, the national security minister, and to the Religious Zionist party of the fi nance minister, Bezalel Smotrich , when he invited them into power . Without them, he faces not only the loss of his position but trial on corruption charges . The far right saw off US attempts to reach a ceasefi re and hostage deal , laying bare the rift between the Israel Defen se Forces and the government. Mr Netanyahu granted Mr Smotrich extensive powers over Israeli settlements and Palestinian construction in the occupied West Bank . In the last month, the military has transferred legal powers in the West Bank to pro-settler civilian offi cials working for Mr Smotrich . He told colleagues that he was “establish[ing] facts on the ground”, adding: “We will establish sovereignty … fi rst on the ground and then through legislation ... My life’s mission is to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state.” Then, last Tuesday , Israel’s supreme court ruled that ultra-Orthodox men must be drafted for military service, threatening the coalition. The exemption originated when the Haredi community was small; now it is projected to account for more than a fi fth of the population by 2042. This is a long-running battle, with governments dodging the issue to avoid alienating ultra- Orthodox voters. But the row has been supercharged by the war in Gaza and clashes with Hezbollah. The government backed a draft bill raising the exemption age for reservists and expanding the length of service. For many Israelis , the exemption no longer looks like an abstract issue but a political favour granted at the expense of themselves or their children. Mr Netanyahu’s departure would not be a magic solution: another prime minister’s policies on Hezbollah and Gaza’s future would probably not look so diff erent. The Biden administration remains reluctant to use its potential leverage – arms supplies, diplomatic positioning and sanctions – as it should to stop the war in Gaza . But an administration governed by a sober consideration of Israel’s needs and priorities might at least fi nd its way to a hostage- and-ceasefi re deal and free itself from the dangerous grip of the far right • Putting his own interests above his country’s is nothing new for Netanyahu Founded 1821 Independently owned by the Scott Trust � Margaret Simons is a journalist, author and a member of the board of the Scott Trust, which owns Guardian Media Group

Opinion The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 50 Letters for publication weekly.letters@ theguardian.com — Please include a full postal address and a reference to the article. We may edit letters. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our terms and conditions, s ee: THEGUARDIAN.COM/ LETTERS-TERMS Editorial Editor: Graham Snowdon Guardian Weekly, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, U K To contact the editor directly: editorial.feedback @theguardian.com Corrections Our policy is to correct signifi cant errors as soon as possible. Please write to guardian. readers@ theguardian.com or the readers’ editor, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, UK W R I T E T O US Sudan has suff ered at dictators’ hands too long It is heartbreaking to read about the situation in Sudan (US warns of the most catastrophic famine for four decades , Spotlight, 21 June). This humanitarian crisis is man-made by essentially two war criminals, in their lust for power. Their infamy must be condemned in the strongest terms. For too long the Sudanese people have suff ered at the hands of dictators, who have no commitment to democracy and human rights. Judith Morrison Nunawading, Victoria, Australia Trump’s crucial role as Putin looks to march on I see similarities between Stalin in 1945 and Putin in 2024 (We’re in 1938 now, 21 June). In 1945 at the Yalta conference, Stalin must have been amazed how easily Churchill and Roosevelt gave him control of the Baltics and eastern Europe. In 2024, Putin must be amazed how the west refuses to go to war against Russia to fully protect Ukraine. Prime minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia (where I was born in 1940) is absolutely right that if Russia occupies Ukraine, as now seems inevitable, Russia will next attempt to occupy the Baltics. The big question is not what will Nato do but what would a President Trump do. Reiner Jaakson Oakville, Ontario, Canada China’s actions increase threat of armed confl ict I found the report on the Philippines – Boats rammed and boarded by Chinese coastguard – rather disturbing (Global report , 28 June). Judging by reports on Chinese reactions to criticism of its heavy- handed “defensive” or inquisitive actions in recent months, the Chinese authorities and their agents seem to believe that they can do no wrong, and the rest of the world will accept their behaviour. How far are they prepared to go with these unsubtle warnings and bullying without provoking armed confl ict, which one hopes they wish to avoid – or do they? Dr Douglas Mackenzie Canberra, ACT, Australia Consider the wider issues before voting out elections I was delighted by the article by George Monbiot (Elections are a travesty of democracy, Opinion, 14 June). As a youngster I worked for Donald Dewar in the 1964 and 1966 elections, but by October 1966, when I got the vote at 21, I had realised that the whole election process was so fl awed that it was unfi t for purpose. I have some doubts if citizen s’ assemblies can survive widening their remit beyond a specifi c issue and making them permanent, but I will be delighted if the article creates demand for a fundamental review seeking change on an evidence-based basis, provided it also considers the wider issues of strategic planning and internationally co ordinated action. Frederick Rennie Milton of Campsie, Scotland, UK • I’m not sure how seriously George Monbiot is in calling for government by lottery rather than election , but, if political life has indeed rotted as a result of elections, I would prefer a truly co operative economy in which everyone contributes and benefi ts fairly . Martin Jewitt Folkestone, England, UK It’s a safe bet that we’ll see No 6 at No 10 this week It is diffi cult to understand the extent of self- infl icted damage by the Tory party during this election campaign – unless infl uential Tories have placed big bets on a massive wipeout for their party . Then it would all make sense ( Election betting scandal grows, UK report 28 June). Mike Cashman Milton Keynes, England, UK • If Keir Starmer is elected as prime minister this week, he will be my eight- year-old granddaughter’s sixth in her lifetime, a milestone not reached by her parents until they were well into their 30s. Roy Collard York, England, UK The fl esh mob riders in Mexico are the wheel deal Delighted to see you introducing a new game of Where’s Willy with your bird’s-eye-view photo of the World Naked Bike Ride in Guadalajara, Mexico (Eyewitness, 28 June). Alan Paterson Cambridge, England, UK The 2010s saw the lowest growth in UK productivity since Waterloo, not the lowest productivity (The Tories must be punished for the chaos and hurt they’ve caused, Opinion, 31 May). We said Donald Trump’s chances of being elected president went above 50% for the fi rst time when he was found guilty on 31 May 2024; in fact this happened on 21 May (A multiple felon can now lead the free world, Opinion, 7 June). C OR R E C T IONS Letters Edith Pritchett A W E E K I N V E N N DI AGR A M S

52 The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 Culture Screen HERE’S A STATE THAT VETERAN HOLLYWOOD ACTORS CAN REACH, beyond ravenous ambition, but with retirement still distant, that seems to make them contented as professionals and mellow as people. Kevin Bacon, now 6 5, has hit that sweet spot. Continually employed for decades, he shares a Manhattan apartment as well as a Connecticut farm with his wife of 35 years, Kyra Sedgwick, and their two adult children, Travis and Sosie. Bacon is in a country band with his brother, Michael, and otherwise channels any musical overspill into adorable Instagram videos of the Family Bacon (barnyard animals included) covering pop songs old and new. The hunger of the 1980s lead-actor-in-waiting, the frustration of the bit-player in mid-career who kept a wary eye on his place in the order of things … these concerns have worn away, Bacon says, with time and with refl ection. “Obviously, I’m not in this to do worse than I did last year,” he tells me, leaning right back on a camel-coloured sofa in his apartment. “But as long as I feel like it’s a good part, an interesting part, something cool, I got no problem moving down a call-sheet.” At the outset of a career, he says, “you get on set and you start to see that it’s hierarchical. Who’s getting paid more? Who’s getting a bigger trailer? Who has the bigger part?” The tendency at fi rst is to see the hierarchy and to try to climb. Bacon strived for a while. “And when I kind of rethought it, and rethought about the possibility of being number 10 on a call-sheet, or number two, or number 25, or whatever – that’s when I fi gured out who I was as an actor. So I no longer have a problem doing a small part. As you can clearly see.” We’ve been brought together to talk about Beverly Hills Cop : Axel F, a sequel in which Bacon makes a very enjoy- able appearance opposite Eddie Murphy, as a villain. He seems fond of the Beverly Hills Cop franchise, now 40 years old and in its fourth instalment. He also talks with animation about another movie of his that’s due out soon, a slasher sequel called MaXXXine, set in the Hollywood of 1984 – the Hollywood that Bacon came up in. That was the year he became a star thanks to Footloose, a hit movie full of immortal pop songs written by Dean Pitchford , in which Bacon starred as Ren, a punky arrival in a small American town, a town stirred to frisky rebellion by Ren’s infectious talent for dance. In recent years, he has grown back into his looks. Having been a blond, spikily handsome 20-something, there were some lost years around the turn of the century when Bacon (with hanging dark hair and a tendency to wear gleaming shirts) looked a little like the kind of nightclub hustler who ends up running off with someone’s money. These days he adopts the aesthetic of a well-to-do country musician, hair cut short and left to grey as it will, leather boots, dark tees. He likes musicians, he says, and tends to feel awe struck in rooms full of them. INTERVIEW By Tom Lamont COVER PHOTOGRAPH Chris Buck The equivalent room full of Hollywood stars wouldn’t intimidate him in the least. Even so, “I fi nd the world of musicians to be incredibly welcoming. I’ve played with some very, very serious cats and I never get the impression that anyone is resentful of the fact that I would wanna play, or write, or sing, or any of those things . When the song starts, you have to groove.” Comparing that to acting, he says: “In the world of fi lm and television what you learn pretty quickly is that, if you’re trying to protect yourself, you gotta play your moment.” That hierarchy again. “It’s even hard to remember that what we do is interactive. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve been told, because of a technical aspect of fi lm-making, to act opposite a piece of tape.” We talk about his childhood. Or, rather, we skip through it quickly at Bacon’s request. “This is a real funny thing to say. But I don’t think that much about my childhood. I really don’t. It’s as though my life kind of began when I left home, when I moved to New York.” Bacon was 17 at the time. He’d grown up in Philadelphia, the youngest of six kids born to Ruth, a teacher, and Edmund, an architect. Both Mr and Mrs Bacon had strong political convictions. “My mother used to take me as a child to rallies in Washington DC, against the Vietnam war . I remember my dad coming home and just raging about that war.” None of this rubbed off on him. “When I left home, I wasn’t thinking about the world. I was really just thinking about me.” COVER PHOTO: GRO OMING BY KAT DRAZEN I continued doing leads for a lot of years, but I wasn’t doing it very well

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 53 “Can I believe it? Yeah. I live it every day.” This January, Sedgwick and Bacon became spokespeople for a political organisation called Swing Left , which aims to encourage swing states to vote Democrat. Bacon says he and his wife were moved to speak up through awareness of their good fortune. “I can’t tell you how many times, in the course of our week, we literally look at each other, me and Kyra, and say how grateful we are that our children are OK. There’s a lot of kids these days who aren’t. The pandemic was extremely tough on people. 9/11. Columbine. Covid. Trump. It’s one thing after another, y’know?” I ask for tips, his playbook, how he and Sedgwick have stayed durable as a couple. No playbook, he says, before making an eff ort to explain. “We’re pretty good at leaving our work at the offi ce. The thing about it is, Kyra’s the type of person who would be very clear if her emotional needs weren’t being met in some sort of way. If the core piece of our love and our marriage was getting short shrift, she would bring it up in a heartbeat. And we would work through it.” He thinks it has probably also helped that the nature of their professions involves a lot of fresh scenery, a lot of sur- prise, a level of open-mindedness and empathy that – after a self-centred start to his career – he now fi nds necessary to put in a performance on screen. “It’s slow, it’s mellow,” he says, “but things do change. Our life is full of change. That’s the thing about being self-employed, doing the kind of gig that we do. Where are we gonna be tomorrow? Whose shoes are we gonna be walkin’ in?” He quotes some lyrics from a song he wrote: “There’s a suitcase with your name on it / there’s one with my name, too / Making plans we know will change / is just something that we do … Y’know, that kinda sums it all up.” Observer TOM LAMONT WRITES REGULARLY FOR THE GUARDIAN AND OBSERVER Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F is on Netfl ix In New York, he lived with one of his sisters in an apartment near the 77 th and Broadway subway. He slept in an enclosed room that had to be locked with a heavy steel bar after dark. He can remember almost everything about those months, except how he went to the toilet. “I can’t imagine not having a bathroom at night . I guess I could have peed out the window . But I never did.” He was auditioning for screen parts, appearing in plays, hungry to make it. Actually, Bacon corrects, “hungry is an understatement. I was starving for success. And for crea- tive fulfi lment. And money. And girls. And fame. All of the coolness. All those things.” At the age of 19 he got a supporting part in 1978’s Animal House and, two years later, he was killed off quite horri- bly in the fi rst Friday the 13th movie, stabbed through the throat with an arrow. He was 23 when he was cast as a high schooler in Footloose, and to prepare himself to play some- one younger, he enrolled for a day as a student at Payson High in Utah, also a shooting location for the fi lm. Locals helped out on the set. Recently, one of them sent Bacon an album of snapshots. “There were some really touching photographs. Most specifi cally, the ones that hit me were me and [Footloose co-star] Chris Penn , who is sadly no longer with us. We were just a couple of dudes, playing around.” Footloose was a massive hit: with complicated results for Bacon’s ego. He laughs, remembering himself in his mid-20s. “I didn’t read the newspapers. I’d read a paper if I thought there was maybe gonna be something about me in it.” For ages he’d ached to be a leading man and now this seemed not only possible, but inevitable. “But, yeah, there was a lot of pressure in it when it fi nally happened. I’m not sure that I was really ready. I continued doing leads for a lot of years, but I wasn’t really doing it very well. I was doing it OK. But the movies weren’t successful. My picker was off . Like, I couldn’t choose! I didn’t want anybody’s advice. I was making some bad mistakes.” He met Sedgwick in 1987 on the set of a movie called Lemon Sky. Listening to him, you get a sense that part of the project (and the success) of the marriage has been to get him to drag his head out of his own backside and notice the world. “Kyra was very, very early on climate change,” he says. “Like, really early. Like, people would say to her, ‘What are you talking about? It’s just weather. Shut up. Why are you such a fucking tree-hugger?’ I remember that so clearly.” Bacon and Sedgwick have had their ups and downs: money made on Bacon’s years-long deal to promote the British mobile network EE, but also money lost when they fell foul of Bernie Madoff ’s ponzi scheme . (In 2022, Bacon admitted to losing “most of our money” at that time). A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO, after a campaign by fans of Footloose, he returned to Payson High for the fi rst time in four decades. He ended the visit with a speech from the bleachers that praised the fi lm’s enduring message : “To be forgiving of people who are not exactly the same as you … to have compassion.” Back in the 1980s, he tells me, “I don’t think all that stuff really hit me.” Bacon pulls a funny pose: a dancer, frozen mid-leap. “The whole marketing around the movie was, ‘I dance! I dance! The songs are good and everybody dances!’ But there’s some really good stuff in that fi lm – messages that still apply.” Can he believe that, with another polarising election looming, the state of forgiveness and compassion in America can seem so parlous? ▼ Murphy’s lore Playing a villain in Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F NETFLIX ▲ Another side of Bacon (Clockwise from above) With Lori Singer in Footloose; 2005 comedy Beauty Shop; horror Friday the 13th AJ PICS/ALAMY; UNITED ARCHIVES; ALLSTAR PICTURE LIBRARY

54 Culture Fireworks, bangers and pink cowboy hats This year’s festival was one of the most diverse editions yet, from K-pop’s Worthy Farm debut, to SZA, Cyndi Lauper and Little Simz By Alexis Petridis Music ▼ Sparks fly Coldplay headlined the Pyramid stage on Saturday JOE MAHER/GETTY GL A S T ON BU RY masturbation that features its singer performing a solo on that school music lesson staple, the recorder. Michael Kiwanuka is fl atly brilliant. His music occupies a space that feels uniquely his, bordered on various sides by soul, funk, confessional singer-songwriting and blazing psychedelic rock . There is something impressive about Little Simz ’s approach to her slot on the Pyramid stage . She performs the opening trio of songs alone, boldly relying only on her charisma and skill as an MC and a sound that cranks the bass up so you can see the screens at the side of the stage shaking. It’s a risk, but it pays off : the audience understandably appear completely captivated. It makes for an intriguing contrast with Coldplay, who have now headlined Glastonbury fi ve times, and, since their last appearance in 2016, have completed a 180-degree turn from earnest stadium balladeers to purveyors of relentless more-is-more visual overload. It’s not so much a performance as a constant bombard- ment of triple-tested hits and spectacle. There are fi reworks, confetti cannon, the illuminated wristbands that turn even the fringes of the crowd into part of the performance. Then there’s the lavishness with which Chris Martin fl atters both his audience and the festival itself, a succes- sion of guests that manages to encompass both Afrobeat legend Femi Kuti and Michael J Fox . It is so wilfully over the top that it leaves Dua Lipa’s show looking like an understatement . Given the amount of pop-country currently occupying the singles chart, it feels timely that Shania Twain – whose steroidal brand of pop- country broke big, as she reminds us, 27 years ago – is in the legends slot. The crowd is enormous: if there’s a global shortage of pink cowboy hats, it’s obvious where the fi nger should be pointed. Towards the end of her set, SZA informs the audience that she was “so nervous to be here”. You can understand why. Judging by the fans who assembled at her O2 arena gig last year, her core audience are teenage girls, not Glas- tonbury’s main demographic . The audience is thinner than those that gathered for Dua Lipa and Coldplay, but they’re touchingly commit- ted . As R&B divas go, she’s impressively eclectic and strikingly eccentric. Her sound hops around: heavy guitars underpin F2F, Love Galore carries a distinct trace of G-funk and Nobody Gets Me is an acoustic ballad with a chorus that keeps threaten- ing to break into Natalie Imbruglia’s Torn . It concludes with her performing 20something, during which she descend s to the barrier at the front of the stage. This being Glastonbury, a degree of weirdness is added by the fact that one of the fans she’s singing her heartfelt ballad to is holding an effi gy of Smithers from The Simpsons on a stick: a suitably peculiar ending to a risky, but ultimately hugely rewarding performance – and indeed Glastonbury festival as a whole. ALEXIS PETRIDIS IS THE GUARDIAN’S HEAD ROCK AND POP CRITIC F riday morning at Glastonbury underlines that the old cliche about the festival having something for everybody is only a cliche because it’s true. Your options range from the dependable – a sharp-suited Squeeze on the Pyramid stage, off ering up one of the late 70s’ most beloved run of hits – to a largely unknown quantity. Now almost 80, Asha Puthli last performed in Britain in 1974: her oeuvre takes in everything from collaborations with Ornette Coleman to Bollywood soundtracks to new wave. T he Pyramid stage plays host to the fi rst-ever Glastonbury appearance by a K-pop band, the almost unreasonably pretty Seventeen . The crowd they draw isn’t vast but some of it is very vociferous indeed . At the other extreme, LCD Soundsystem off er a kinetic, party-starting burst of hits – All My Friends, Dance Yrself Clean , an extended version of Losing My Edge that inter- polates snatches of tracks by artists the lyrics reference, among them Daft Punk and Yazoo . According to the most intriguing bit of her between-song chat, Dua Lipa ’s headlining Glas- tonbury slot came about as a result of an act of childhood manifesting. Whether you buy that or not, she has clearly spent a lot of time carefully studying and absorbing how a successful Glaston- bury headline set works . She throws every thing she has at it to create a sense of occasion . Less surprising is the scale of the audience at the Other stage for the Last Dinner Party: they seem to have sidestepped accusations of hype to become the breakthrough British alt-rock band of 2024 . It is fairly obvious why things have worked out for them. There is defi nitely a hint of con- trivance about the whole enterprise, but Abigail Morris is a genuinely charismatic frontwoman . Cyndi Lauper ’s She Bop is clearly not the only song in pop history about masturbation, but it is probably the only song in pop history about

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly When clubs reopened and comedians started gigging again, sharing crowd work clips felt like a natural progression. From US comic and TikTok star Matt Rife getting his own Netfl ix special to Liverpudlian comedian Paul Smith performing in arenas on his upcoming tour , stand ups have built careers around crowd work clips. A typical Smith clip sees him seek out a man in the front row who he learns is a retired prison offi cer . When the man explains he knows the person he’s come with from work, Smith asks if he’s a prisoner and if they let them “ keep one when they retire ”. When Edinburgh-based comic Liam Withnail saw Smith’s videos, he couldn’t believe “none of us had thought of doing this” . So Withnail started posting a crowd work clip from his shows MCing at Edinburgh’s Monkey Barrel Comedy to TikTok every day for three months . Crowd work has long been part of standup, with many of the greats (Ross Noble, Dara Ó Briain in the UK, Don Rickles and Paula Poundstone in the US) making it a key part of their acts. But in comedy clubs, those chatty moments are often performed by the compere and help keep an audience hyped up for the performers . Such work has historically received little respect: comedian Erika Ehler says when she was Seat of their bants Viral clips of comedians’ ‘crowd work’ are remaking standup for the social media age. But do these interactions detract from the craft? By Isobel Lewis � Tell and show Comedians Erika Ehler, Liam Withnail and Ali Woods all use clips to build their audience T he front row of a comedy club is a scary place to be. Those courageous enough to brave that spot do so know- ing that, at any moment, a microphone could be thrust into their face by a comedian . Such unscripted back -and -forths – or “crowd work” – ha s always been a part of standup, often seen to separate the good writers or performers from those with truly funny bones. It’s these moments, when tension fi zzes and audience members squirm, that the crowd regale to their friends with the phrase: “You had to be there.” But thanks to the internet, you don’t have to be in the room to see crowd work. TikTok and Instagram are fl ooded with footage of standup comics showing off their off -the-cuff interactions with audience members . These clips share the same instantly recognisable template. The dia- logue is accompanied by fast-moving subtitles where words are highlighted one by one . Then, they’re packaged up with a caption distilling the exchange : “Heckler can’t handle it” or “Audience member breaks comedians”. It’s comedy click- bait, the latest string to the comedian-turned- content-creator’s bow. During Covid, acts buil t up substantial online followings with front-facing camera sketches. The workload is now three times as much as it was when I started Culture Stage ILLUSTRATION: MARTIN TOGNOLA �

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 56 Culture The Bear Disney+ ★★★☆☆ Graciela Iturbide: Shadowlines Photographers’ Gallery, London ★★★★☆ G raciela Iturbide ’s photographs rasp, screech and thrum from the unutterable corners of the soul . Iturbide is a master of metaphor and allegory. Death is always edg ing the corners of her photographs . There are harbingers of death – angels, calaveras, mourners performing rituals at cemeteries, settings for many of Iturbide’s works in the 70s and 80s. Then there’s her masterpiece, Angel Woman (above), photographed in the Sonoran desert in 1979 – the hunched fi gure of the woman, more Grim Reaper than saviour , form ing the shape of a crucifi x against the landscape . T his show demonstrates that her best work was made in Mexico. T he landscapes of Oaxaca and the Juchitán seem to vividly ignite her vision . The works she made there in the late 70s and 80s stand out – mostly portraits of the Indigenous women and children she lived with, learned from and was healed by . But wherever Iturbide went with her camera, it’s hard to escape the feeling of fatalism, mystery and melancholy . Her images grip you fi ercely around the throat and don’t let you go . Charlotte Jansen To 22 September I am going to be hard on The Bear , because when the show is fl ying, it really is wonderful television. If the fi rst season cooked up a solid base for the drama, returning troubled chef Carmen Berzatto (Jeremy Allen White ) to The Beef, the hectic Chicago sandwich shop owned by his recently deceased brother Mikey ( Jon Bernthal ), the second season refi ned it beautifully. It returns for a third season under another level of expectation. But pressure is one of The Bear’s main themes. Season two ended with Carmen fi nally closing down (most of) The Beef and preparing to open his own far fancier restaurant, The Bear. But the return of his professional ambitions comes at a price: he stampedes towards greatness at the cost of his two most solid relationships, with girlfriend Claire ( Molly Gordon ) and the newly reformed “Cousin” Richie ( Ebon Moss-Bachrach ). Season three, then, fi nds itself in a tricky spot: if Carmen largely gets what he wants, professionally at least, where can the story go? It doesn’t quite fi nd a solution. Seasons three and four were reportedly fi lmed back-to-back, and you can tell, because these 10 episodes feel like half of something. When it has its moments, The Bear is still one of the fi nest shows on television . Everyone is either screaming at one another to “shut the fuck up” (nobody does) or insisting how much they love each other. These extremes sum up season three, which wobbles between the two states. Even in its fl aws, I feel very fond of The Bear. But in truth, this is not The Bear at its best. Rebecca Nicholson Reviews T E L E V I SION P HO T O GR A P H Y Podcast of the week Was Justice Served? Jen Baldwin and David Wilson boast that they’ll be looking at gory, heartbreaking and sensational cases in this new podcast . In the opening case, historian David Olusoga sensitively tells the story of his great -great -grandfather, who was convicted of murder in the 1890s, and the impact it had on his family. Hannah Verdier T E L E V I SION starting out in Canada , you’d only do crowd work as a “last resort” . For comics, posting organic moments also prevents the “burning” of material. Ali Woods , who has amassed more than 17 m likes on TikTok with sketches and live standup footage, says the comic’s mindset used to be that once material was shared on video, it was unusable in a live set. You’d save your best stuff for your special, or a Live at the Apollo appearance, “where you’d do that material”, and it was then burn ed, h e says. But crowd work doesn’t have that problem. No two audience interactions will be the same . However, posting clips like these does involve a lot of extra work. Often the act fi lms their own material . By now, Woods’s operation is slick and well - practised. He brings his own camera and tripod to all his gigs, and wears a clip-on mic to capture audio to the handheld microphone he uses on stage. “The workload is now three times as much as it was when I started,” Withnail says. Comedians don’t just have to write and gig, but be “full-time content creators”. T here can be snobbery towards that video-fi rst way of thinking. Withnail tells me there’s a n “unspoken rule” that at a mixed-bill night the compere is the one who banters with the audience between acts; an act doing their own crowd work is “not really the done thing”. But the desire for clips means more are, and “stepping on the compere’s toes”. “It’s a cause of some friction between the older comics and the newer comics,” Withnail says. The prevalence of crowd work online is changing how audiences think about standup, too. While Withnail echoes that most people are still “terrifi ed” of audience interaction, Ehler argues that less “comedy-savvy” crowds now “expect every act to just be crowd work”. Woods says he is judged more harshly for his live clips than sketches . “The hate you’ll get from stand up is way quicker, way more volatile online,” he says. This, in part, explains Ehler’s initial reticence to post her crowd work online. “As a woman on the internet, I’m not only being judged for my jokes, I’m being judged for my looks. That’s something that I had to just deal with, because there’s no answer for it.” Yet Ehler and others return to crowd work , despite the extra eff ort and the reducing of com- edy to a clickbait-y moment. “I’ve seen it work for other people, and the formula is very clear,” she says. “You just keep posting, and you’ll fi nd people who relate to you and want to see you. That does translate to butts in seats, which trans- lates to money in your pockets.” And that’s no laughing matter. ISOBEL LEWIS IS A CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT JOURNALIST Ali Woods, Erika Ehler and Liam Withnail are all appearing at Edinburgh festival fringe; see edfringe.com Stage

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 57 Culture ▲ Young ones Our vivid teen years can define our adulthood GORDON MUNRO/PYMCA/ AVALON/GETTY W hat does your reminiscence bump look like? If this sounds like a blow to the head with a touch of amnesia, it isn’t – but it might be just as painful. No, as Lucy Foulkes explains in her eye-opening guide to the psychology of adolescence, it’s the period of life during which people report the greatest number of important autobiographical memories. For most of us, it starts at about 10 and peaks at 20, taking in a plethora of fi rsts: fi rst kiss, fi rst love, fi rst time drinking alcohol or taking drugs, fi rst time away from home. Not to mention exams, bullying, breakups and bereavement. Thinking about it, maybe a concussion would be preferable. But then, as Foulkes shows, it’s these enduringly vivid years that defi ne the adults we become. Foulkes, a research fellow in psychology at the University of Oxford , conducted 23 in- depth interviews for Coming of Age and they are by turns funny , hair-raising and desperately sad. Occasionally, like Naomi’s account of her fi rst love, Peter, they have a sort of novelistic potency. In any case, the majority of readers will fi nd someone they can identify with . Most are now in their 30s and are looking back wistfully, with regret, or with something like equanimity. Their accounts allow Foulkes to bring out her central point: that we narrate our lives into being, and that adolescence is so important partly because it is where this narration begins . The stories we tell ourselves shape who we are , and we can get stuck in these stories, or change them to our advantage. The book isn’t just anecdote, though, and clearly explained research delivers many counterintuitive insights. There are, for example, two ways to be popular. “Perceived popu- larity” is the province of jocks and cheerleaders, the boys and girls who, if you’re lucky, might laugh at one of your jokes or let you hang out with them . The consensus is that they’re popular, but when you ask individuals, it turns out pretty much everyone hates them. That’s in contrast to “sociometric popularity”, which involves actually being liked; these are the considerate, supportive friends, the ones you actually enjoy hanging out with. The quickest route to perceived popularity is to conform to the “stereotypical appearance and behaviours associated with [your] gender”. This phenomenon – sporty lads and girly girls rule the roost – is thought partly to refl ect bio- logical imperatives. “Gender prototypical teens” are the ones “assumed to attract more sexual partners”. In other words, Foulkes writes drily, “teenagers give social status to teenagers who are most likely to be fancied”. The reign of the perceived popular doesn’t necessarily extend into adulthood. The qualities demanded of teens at the top of the social hierarchy, such as ruthless- ness, don’t always serve them well later in life, whereas the soft skills and support networks nurtured by the sociometrically popular stand them in good stead. Foulkes’s chapter on risk-taking is especially interesting, debunking the idea that teenagers have an illusion of invincibility . She says there’s little evidence they’re unaware of the potential dangers of so-called “pseudomature” behaviours like smoking, taking drugs or having unprotected sex. In fact, they tend to overestimate the likeli- hood of bad stuff happening, but do it anyway. Why? Well, apart from the undeniable rewards – some of those things just feel good – it’s often because they’re more scared of the social risk of not taking part. The temptation is to wrap them in cotton wool but, as Foulkes shows, this can have damaging consequences. If young people aren’t able to learn through experience that worst-case scenarios rarely occur, their anxiety may grow. Adolescence is by its nature an intensely stressful time, she argues, and for some this triggers mental illness. But if teenagers are busy writing their lives, do we want to insert a chapter titled “too fragile to cope”, unless absolutely necessary? Coming of Age ends movingly. Foulkes showed each of her subjects what she’d written . These were stories of joy, pain and loss that had reverberated through their lives. For many, seeing them presented as part of the broader story of adolescence prompted a re-evaluation. One said their “shoulders had fi nally dropped” after 20 years, another that they now felt ready to talk to others about what they had been through. Adolescence may be the fi rst draft of personhood, but it doesn’t have to be the last . DAVID SHARIATMADARI IS THE GUARDIAN’S NON FICTION BOOKS EDITOR S O C I E T Y Teenage kicks From f irst times to being popular and taking risks, this wise and revelatory study overturns the received wisdom of adolescence By David Shariatmadari B O OK OF T H E W E E K Coming of Age By Lucy Foulkes Books

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 58 Culture L ike the protagonist of Yorùbá Boy Running, Biyi Bándélé had been running from a young age. At 14, he won a writing competition at school; another award in his 20s, for his radio play script Rain, took him to London in 1990. He hit the ground running there, publishing his fi rst novel, The Man Who Came in from the Back of Beyond , in 1991 . This was the beginning of a prolifi c and multifaceted career that, sadly, came to an end when Bándélé died suddenly in 2022 at the age of 54 . At the time he was putting the fi nishing touches to his film adaptation of Wole Soyinka’s play Death and the King’s Horseman – a play very much cent red on death and redemption and now available on Netfl ix as Elesin Oba: The King’s Horseman. The forms of his output were as diverse as his subject matter . He went from writing radio plays to stage plays, then novels and short stories ; he then directed fi lms and TV and, towards the end of his life, turned to street photo- graphy. Stories about his new home in England sat alongside pieces about the Nigeria he left at a young age. His departure came before the collapse of Nigeria’s education system, before General Sani Abacha ’s reign of terror and the death of the environmentalist Ken Saro-Wiwa – before most of the events that would become the topics of a new generation of writers. Because of that his subject matter is more diverse and eclectic, much harder to classify. What is clear, though, is his penchant for historical subjects – from his stage adaptation of Chinua Achebe’s novel Things Fall Apart , set in precolonial Nigeria, to his fi lm adaptation of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s civil war novel, Half of a Yellow Sun , to his own second world war novel, Burma Boy , in 2007 . The latter is one of the few M any stories start with a young stranger coming to town. Often it is a place of half-remembered child- hood stories and magic, somewhere not yet experienced fi rst -hand. In Sami Kent ’s enthralling book, the town is a whole country. The Endless Country is a n attempt to tell Turkey’s history – the fi rst 100 years since the republic’s founding – through Kent’s own story of coming back to the land of his father . But more than that: by talking to people and visiting places involved with each decade of that century, Kent brings the past alive. It is, as its author says, “more mosaic than textbook”. Kent uncovers the country layer by layer, reeling in horror at past crimes , awed by tales of generosity and courage. He starts with his great-grand father, reputedly the gigolo of an exiled Egyp- tian princess in the dying days of the novels by an African author about African soldiers in the second world war, and it shows Bándélé ’s growing ambition and confi dence as a writer. Formally, it is both a war story and a bildungs roman – something in the tradition of Saro-Wiwa’s Soza boy . But what makes it really stand out is the author’s adroit use of farce to capture the tragic realities of war. The 14-year-old protagonist, Ali Banana , is lured by the romance of wearing a military uniform, only to end up in the malaria-infested jungles of India and Burma fi ghting the Japanese on behalf of the British. Told in the form of a Hausa folk tale, it is a brilliant performance, and most readers saw it as a harbinger of what was to come. But then no more novels followed. His attention turned to fi lm directing; now we know that he was also always working on this posthu- mous novel, Yorùbá Boy Running . Here, again, Bándélé is turning to history for inspiration. Like Burma Boy, which drew on Bándélé ’s father’s stories, Yorùbá Boy Running was partly inspired by the history of Bándélé ’s great- grandfather, who, like his protagonist, Samuel Àjàyí Crowther , was formerly enslaved. At the age of 13, the real-life Crowther was captured with his entire family and most of his village by Fulani slave raiders; taken to the slave barracoons on Eko island, or Lagos, as it was named by Portuguese merchants; and eventually sold off to transatlantic slave traders. The slave ship, bound for Brazil, was captured by British navy boats and Crowther was set free. He was settled in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which was founded for returned enslaved men and women. The fi ctional Crowther’s story, as well as the real-life one, is a remarkable saga of persever- ance, dedication and triumph over adversity. When his brilliance became apparent to the white Yorùbá Boy Running By Biyi Bándélé H I S T ORY F IC T ION After Atatürk A panorama of Turkey’s history told through people and places from each decade since the republic was founded Freedom cry The Nigerian writer and f ilm-maker’s last work is inspired by the enslaved Samuel Àjàyí Crowther, in a novel of triumph over adversity By Elçin Poyrazlar By Helon Habila Ottoman empire . Entwining the personal and political, Kent takes us to Yeldeğirmeni , once a cosmopolitan neighbourhood in Istanbul, where Turks, Greeks, Armenians and Jews lived together, only to be torn apart by the 1923 founda- tion of the republic. Under its founder, Atatürk , th e nation shed its multi-ethnic character , turning into a mostly Turkish, almost exclusively Muslim country. Kent fi nds a cruelty in this Turkishness as the young republic asserted itself . The 1930s brought a harder nationalism . Kent meets Hasan, a 92-year-old Alevi Kurd and a witness of the atrocities in Dersim, a cent re for Turkey’s Alevis – a branch of Islam that diff ers from the mainstream Sunni faith. The state used planes and bombs to pur- sue the “annihilation of bandits”; at least 13,000 people died. Hasan remembers deportations after the killings. The Endless Country By Sami Kent ▼ History man Samuel Àjàyí Crowther ALPHA HISTORICA / ALAMY Books

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 59 them all. When Anthony Piglet gives him a fl ower, however, his whole world goes into freefall in this hilarious little 6+ story of a bumpy road to redemption, heightened by Latimer’s expressive illustrations. The Last Dragon By Polly Ho-Yen , illustrated by Charis Loke Worried about her little sister in hospital, Yara fi nds it hard to stay out of trouble . When the last dragon on Earth fi nds Yara , her life becomes more complicated, as the dragon leaves her a gift that will force her to take radical action. This powerful allegory of humans’ responsibility to the natural world is a cracking read for 8+, with fantastic illustrations. Mayowa and the Sea of Words By Chibundu Onuzo Mayowa’s Grandpa Edward is an eccentric with a secret. By jumping on a book, he can harness the emotions inside it and direct them into other people. But when Mayowa discovers she shares the family ability, she and her grandfather face some diffi cult choices – especially when they have the chance to save the lives of refugees, but must contend with hate- fuelled opposition. Full of heart and energy, this lively 9+ fantasy is the fi rst in a trilogy. missionaries, they recruited him to their ranks. Thus began his inexorable rise – he was running not from the slavers this time, but towards a singular career as a teacher, preacher, linguist, author and abolitionist. What Bándélé brings to this well-known story is his ability slowly and painstakingly to build his protagonist’s character, not just as the public fi gure known to every schoolchild in Nigeria – the fi rst black man to be ordained a bishop by the Anglican Church of England, the fi rst African to earn a degree from the University of Oxford – but also as a father, a son, a husband and a citizen. The book paints a vivid picture of an emergent Lagos, with its slave markets and its vibrant Saro (returned slaves) community; its king, Dosunmu, forced by the British to sign a treaty at gunpoint ceding away his kingdom for its “protection”. Bándélé ’s highest achievement, for me, is the opening section of the book, dedicated to recreat- ing life in Crowther’s home town of Òsogùn circa 1821 before tragedy befell it. A drunken and rapa- cious king surrounded by sycophantic courtiers ensures that the town is ripe for the picking by slave raiders, who soon descend upon it. This section reads almost like a play, with carefully choreographed entrances and exits, a devas- tating sense of humour and dramatic action. But one doesn’t come to a posthumous novel for its perfect fi nish; not all the sections of the book are as polished or as inventive as the open- ing part. The editors have done a great job of ordering and signposting the diff erent sections with dates and thematic headings, making it easier to follow the intricate chronology of the narrative. We are lucky that the author was able to leave us with this bookend to his glorious if truncated career that began long ago in Kafan- chan, Nigeria, when he started running towards a distinguished future in faraway London. HELON HABILA IS A NIGERIAN NOVELIST AND POET By Imogen Russell Williams Kent describes today’s Turkey as a prison nation. Silivri , a once wealthy seaside town 70km west of Istanbul , now hosts one of the world’s biggest jails. The inmates include political prisoners prosecuted in show trials . In the epilogue, Kent mourns that this is not the book he had wanted to write when he hoped that Turkey’s centenary would mark a turn towards greater democracy. Instead, this is how he sums up Turkey today : “A president in almost total control, a subservient assembly, a cowed judiciary, a media brought thoroughly into line.” It is a panorama that fi lls Kent, like many Turks , with anger and shame. Those sentiments ripple throughout th e book, along with humour and inspiration. In the introduction, he asks: “What is Turkey and who is it for?” By the book’s end he has shown that it is much bigger than its government; Turkey is indeed endless. ELÇIN POYRAZLAR IS AN AUTHOR AND COLUMNIST FROM TURKEY B O OK S OF T H E MON T H Children’s and teens roundup – the best new picture books and novels Grotti By Leonie Lord When a knight discovers a lost green baby, battling beasts and defending kingdoms must give way to making Grotti happy. But what will happen once Grotti fi nds his family? A funny, sweet, original picture book about adapting to babies’ needs. Best of All By Smriti Halls and Chaaya Prabhat A joyful, poetic picture- book paean to diverse heritage, family stories and the unique mixtures that make up every child. Smelly Peggy By Helen Stephens Rescue dog Peggy loves to be naughty, especially by rolling in terrible smells. But no one’s perfect …. This acutely observed picture book distils dogs’ unrepentant joy in stinky mischief, and their small owners’ secret delight. Gordon, the Meanest Goose on Earth By Alex Latimer There are plenty of mean geese out there – but Gordon is the meanest of Four Eids and a Funeral By Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé and Adiba Jaigirdar Said and Tiwa used to be inseparable, until a spectacular falling-out several Eids ago. Now Said’s at boarding school , and the two never talk. But when Said comes home for a funeral and the Islamic centre burns down on the same day, the former best pals are forced to team up as they campaign to rebuild it. Will their loathing revert to friendship – or turn to stronger feelings? This spirited, engrossing enemies-to-lovers romance is written by a duo of bestselling YA authors (and real-life best friends). Us in the Before and After By Jenny Valentine Mab and Elk have been best friends since they were 11. Now, aged 16, a tragic accident robs them of their bond – but they aren’t yet ready to say goodbye. Instead, they relive their lives together in conversations, remembering how Elk fell in love with Mab’s brother, and what led up to the moment that can’t be undone. The award- winning Valentine’s return to YA is tearjerking, elegant and beautifully written, perfect for fans of John Green and Kathleen Glasgow . IMOGEN RUSSELL WILLIAMS IS A CHILDREN’S BOOK CRITIC

The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 60 Lifestyle S T E P H E N C OL L I NS I am working in my offi ce shed when my wife texts, ordering me to sit in the house in case the alarm service engineer turns up. I obey, in the hope of fi nally being freed from torment. The burglar alarm has been going off at random moments: sometimes at four in the morning, sometimes at two in the afternoon. It can happen on consecutive nights, or it may stay quiet for a week. The noise is not the alarm – it’s some kind of warning chirp. But it’s loud enough to wake you up, and to make it stop you have to go down to the hall and type in a four-digit code. An explanation would fl it across its screen – but it always went dark before I could read the whole thing. “I can’t live like this,” I would always say as I came back to bed. But it turned out I could: this has been going on since February. The chirps are random and infrequent enough, to think that every time might be the last . By degrees we went mad. The engineer arrives in the middle of lunch. Irregular bleeps have been driving me to distraction “Thank God you’ve come,” I say, my mouth still full. We show him the box in the hall and try to explain. “It can happen at any time, day or night,” my wife says. “The panel says something about a fault,” I say. “Bedroom, panic, then it goes dark.” “I’ll just take a look at the fault log,” the engineer says. My wife and I return to the kitchen table, but lunch now feels over. The engineer comes in. “I’ve examined the unit’s fault log, and unfortunately it thinks it’s 2009,” he says. He has a bushy beard and speaks in the stilted cadences of a BBC Open University lecturer. “So I’ve reset that ,” says the engineer . “And I’ll now move on to the next diagnostic level.” When he goes back into the hall, my wife turns to me. “Don’t leave me alone with him,” she says. A sequence of diff erent distress chirps sounds. In between each, the engineer leans his head into the room and raises his eyebrows. “No,” my wife says. “Not that one.” Finally, we hear it . “That’s it,” I say. “Bedroom panic something.” “Right,” says the engineer. “That is normally associated with a low battery in an unwired sensor.” “It says panic and bedroom on the thing,” I say. “And I will check that in due course,” he says. “But I have here a list of all the sensors in the house, and only three are unwired.” “So, one on your kitchen window . One on the kitchen door, and one for the conservatory.” “We don’t have a conservatory,” I say. “I’ve already made a note of that here,” he says. “Now we just need to locate the radio base unit.” “And here it is,” he says, reaching above the door of the cupboard to remove the unit’s cover. “And that is telling me nothing at the moment.” “Oh good,” my wife says. “No problem, just bear with me while I reset the timer on the control panel,” he says. After, he leaves the room, my wife and I observe a moment’s silence. “I have to work,” I say. “Stay where you are,” she says. Half a dozen other possible faults are eliminated, and narrated. This includes my theory that something is amiss with the bedroom panic button. “I’ve checked that for you now,” the engineer says. “And there are no problems there.” “By the process of elimination, that leaves us with a low battery situation,” he says. The low batteries, he tells us, would account for the randomness of the alarm’s chirp: the base unit only checks in with the sensors periodically, and they are only sometimes too weak to respond. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” my wife says. “Sorry to sound like morons.” “Defi ant morons,” I say. “One more thing,” my wife says. “Can you show us how to turn it on?” ‘I can’t live like this,’ I would say as I came back to bed. But it turned out I could MODE R N L I F E Tim Dowling y

Prep 20 min Cook 10 min Serves 4 Ingredients 2-3 courgettes, coarsely grated (500g) Sea salt and black pepper 50g plain flour 1 tsp baking powder 3 tbsp fine breadcrumbs 1 bunch spring onions, trimmed and finely sliced ½ bunch mint, leaves picked and finely chopped 1 block halloumi (a bout 225g), coarsely grated 2 large eggs, beaten (plus 4 extra if serving with poached eggs) Olive oil, for frying Chilli jam, to serve № 274 Courgette and halloumi fritters T H E W E E K LY R E C I P E By Georgina Hayden E A SK O T T OL E NGH I I love your recipes, but I often can’t get the likes of membrillo, creme fraiche, preserved lemon , pomegranate molasses and harissa . What alternatives would you suggest ? Joyce, St John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada Wherever possible, you want to stay within the same fl avour profi le and texture, so if, for example, a recipe calls for creme fraiche , particularly as an accompaniment to a dish , soured cream or thick Greek yoghurt make fi ne substitutes. If it’s for baking, however, I’d use soured cream , because it has a similar tanginess to creme fraiche . Pomegranate molasses-wise , date molasses would work as a replacement , though you might want to add a little lemon juice to mimic the sweet-sour note of pomegranate molasses ; honey or maple syrup mixed with lemon juice will also provide th e requisite tangy note and thick sweetness. And while we’re on the subject of sweetness, simply replace membrillo with another sweet paste: thick apricot or fi g jam both work really well. Preserved lemons are often used to bring a pop of surprise to a dish, so, though they’re not quite the same, give capers or olives a go. If, on the other hand, it’s their lemony taste that’s required, don’t underestimate the power of fresh lemon juice or grated zest . If you fancy a project, you could make your own preserved lemons or harissa . You can either go for a quick preserved lemon or one that takes a fair bit longer , but both only really require fresh lemons to start off with . The list of ingredients for harissa , meanwhile, might appear daunting , but, chances are, you already have a lot of the m in the cupboard, so that’s just a case of putting them together. Th e same goes for spice mixes such as baharat and nutty dukkah . Above all, however, don’t ever not make a recipe just because you’re missing one ingredient. Don’t tell anyone, but if you really can’t fi nd an alternative , I promise the world will keep turning if you just leave it out. Keep that between us, though, yes? YOTAM OTTOLENGHI IS CHEF-PATRON OF THE OTTOLENGHI DELIS AND THE NOPI AND ROVI RESTAURANTS Lacking an ingredient? Don’t miss out, so just bring on a substitute YANA MARGULIS RUBIN/GETTY Got a kitchen question for Yotam Ottolenghi? Scan the QR code The se keftedes are fantastic as part of a meze or bigger spread – great for lunchboxes or party food, and I particularly like them for breakfast or brunch. The eggs aren’t essential but I think they elevate the meal, while the sweet and spicy chilli jam compl ements the salty halloumi perfectly. Method Put the grated courgettes in a colander in the sink, toss them with a teaspoon of salt and leave for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, put the plain fl our, baking powder and breadcrumbs in a large bowl , add ground black pepper to taste and mix to combine. When the courgettes have had their 10 minutes, squeeze them really well to get rid of the excess water, then transfer to the bowl with the fl our mix. Toss to combine, making sure the courgettes are well coated . Add the sliced spring onions, chopped mint and grated halloumi, and stir well. Mix in the eggs and stir a gain. If serving with eggs, put a pan of water on to boil for the poached or boiled eggs, and cook to your liking. Divide the fritter mixture into 12 : each should roughly be the size of one heaped tablespoon. Put a large frying pan on a medium heat, add a few tablespoons of olive oil, then fry the fritters, in batches if need be, for about four minutes on each side. Serve topped with a generous dollop of chilli jam and a poached egg or a peeled and halved boiled egg, if you like. lved

62 Diversions The Guardian Weekly 5 July 2024 C OU N T RY DI A RY SH I P L E Y West Yorkshire, England, UK C I N E M A C ON N E C T Killian Fox C H E S S Leonard Barden World chess is coming to London in October. First up is the Global Chess League from 3-12 October at Friends House, Euston. The franchise-based league, backed by Tech Mahindra, was climaxed on its debut at Dubai last year by a one-move checkmate. Magnus Carlsen took part then, but details of this year’s event are still to be confi rmed. The Global League will be followed on 14-18 October by the WR Cup, a 16-player elite knockout at rapid chess time rates. The fi eld is headed by India’s 1 Which guide featured illustrations of Charles and Edeltraud Raymond? 2 Which bird sings while fl ying up vertically above its nest? 3 Who is the UK’s fi rst billionaire musician? 4 Which empire was named after an Arabic word for slave? 5 What type of drink is pét-nat? 6 What New York store’s slogan is “18 miles of books”? 7 Members of what would wear a 1% patch? 8 Which capital city is home to the world’s 1 Wordpool Give the nearest defi nition STURNINE a) original name of iodine b) forbidding c) of /pertaining to starlings d) self-defeating 2 Jumblies Rearrange MEASURING to make another word. former world champion Vishy Anand and the world No 4 and two-time world championship contender Ian Nepomniachtchi, and also includes the women’s world champion, Ju Wenjun, and England’s current No 1, Nikita Vitiugov. Chessfest, the annual family-friendly and free celebration of the game in Trafalgar Square , returns on Sunday 7 July. Last year 15,000 visitors came for the chance to challenge a grandmaster or master at fi ve-minute blitz chess or in a simultaneous display. Many of England’s top players and rising junior talents will be present. There will be free lessons for beginners, and a Living Chess game with actors as pieces. T he cricket fi eld has been freshly mown and marked, but there are no cricketers out there now – just birds, turning over the cuttings in search of breakfast. Starlings at midwicket, crows at slip. A magpie on the long-leg boundary. A song thrush works for a worm on the cut strip . Across the lane from the cricket fi eld there’s a community nature reserve, Hirst Wood , and a shallow pond fringed with short reeds. The mood here is sullen. Adolescent tadpoles, each a heavy-bodied Cooper Black comma, sulk on the silt bed. The pond skaters move stiffl y among the lily pads. A newt treads water in a lily shadow – and then there’s a sudden surge of motion, and a freshwater leech comes swimming across a shaft of daylight. It’s khaki green – so empty of blood, for now . It ripples its long, fl at body in a sort of swimming shudder to propel itself through the water. Leeches are wolfi sh predators. I think this one’s a duck leech, Protoclepsis t esselata . They like to anchor themselves inside the throats of ducks and other waterbirds to feed. No ducks here today, though – only a wren yelling in a fl owering elder, and the grey refl ections of wood pigeons passing overhead. Weeds are enjoying the weather. Forests of groundsel and wild c amomile have risen from the angles of walls and pavements. Wild c amomile, a long-naturalised immigrant from the US, is also known as pineappleweed . I squidge a fl ower in my fi ngers to remind myself why ( the pineapple zing of a wild c amomile fl ower is like a microdose of sunshine). Before I move on, I relocate an idling snail from the pavement to the grass verge. I stepped on one on our back steps yesterday. A small repayment. Richard Smyth Answers Quiz 1 The Joy of Sex. 2 Skylark. 3 Paul McCartney. 4 Mamluk empire/ sultanate (medieval Egypt). 5 Sparkling wine (pétillant naturel). 6 Strand Bookstore. 7 Outlaw motorcycle clubs. 8 Mexico City. 9 South West Coast Path (UK). 10 Married to Rupert Murdoch . 11 Shared chemical symbols/US state abbreviations (atomic number) . 12 Keywords of films in Planet of the Apes series. 13 British footballers who won European Cup with overseas clubs . 14 Films featuring Elizabeth I. 15 Places abandoned after industrial accident/ decline . Maslanka 1 c). 2 GERANIUMS. 3 REST. 4 All precedable by DR to make another word. Cinema Connect There Will Be Blood , Phantom Thread and The Master were all directed by Paul Thomas Anderson. a b 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 c d e f g h 39261...Rxe4! 2 dxe4 Qg3! when the queen and f4 pawn combine for a mating attack or to win the h1 rook. The game ended 3 e5 Qxf3+ 4 K g1 Qc1+ 5 Kg2 f3+ 6 Kh2 Qf4+ 7 Kg1 Qg3+ and White resigned due to 8 Kf1 Qg2+ 9 Ke1 Qe2 mate. 3926 Sarah Longson v Elis Dicen, English Women’s Championship 2024. Black to move and win. QU I Z Thomas Eaton P U Z Z L E S Chris Maslanka largest bullring? What links: 9 Minehead, Somerset, and Poole Harbour, Dorset? 10 Booker; Torv; Deng; Hall; Zhukova? 11 Alabama (13); California (20); Colorado (27); Florida (114); Louisiana (57)? 12 Beneath; Escape; Conquest; Battle; Rise; Dawn; War; Kingdom? 13 Bellingham, Bale and McManaman; Hargreaves; Lambert? 14 Fire Over England; Jubilee; Orlando; Shakespeare in Love; The Sea Hawk? 15 Fordlândia, Brazil; Gil man, US ; Pripyat, Ukraine; Wittenoom, Australia? 3 Four-Letter Word What four-letter word may be appended to each of these beginnings in each case making a word? ar—, B—, ba—, c—, fo—, since—, un—, w— . 4 Tell Me Doctor These words begin with a vowel. What else links them? ably, aft, am, apes, aping, aught, awl, edge, ill, ink, one, ought, over & own. © CMM2024 ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER Name the films and the director who connects them. Notes and Queries The long-running series that invites readers to send in questions and answers on anything and everything

5 July 2024 The Guardian Weekly 63 12 Reject northern support for branch line? (5) 14 These are the lowest limits of zone covering roads banning a diesel’s lead (5) 16 Two eggs, one taken by terrible vermin – it eats everything (8) 17 Company (American) to be sick about empty transport: it’s not as long as a train (4-4) 19 A ferry scuttled to become lighter (6) 20 One must approach a bull in lust or eroticism (6) 21 Boatman’s transport’s popular (4) 23 Finally, gridlock to diminish: will changes in complexion come from this? (4) Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9. Last week’s solution 7 Shaggy dog story – (woollen) thread (4) 10 Breakfast maker? (6,4) 12 Join metal sheets using heat and pressure (4-4) 13 Persuasive (8) 16 Snowmobile (6) 18 Strike-breaker (derog.) (4) 19 Leaf (anag.) (4) Across 1 Fop – deer – Nebraska note? (4) 3 Very great – as God (8) 8 Roman poet (4) 9 White wine and soda (8) 11 Gumshoe (7,3) 14 Padded footstool (6) 15 Top (6) 17 Push off – (as might string?) (3,7) 20 Southern Rockies state (8) 21 ‘Doing’ word (4) 22 Boffin (8) 23 Dormant (4) Down 1 Deliverer of poisoned dart? (8) 2 Review (8) 4 Pedals (anag.) (6) 5 That really is true! (1,3,3,3) 6 State of confusion or blurriness (4) Solution No 16,885 G L A S S S L I P P E R C O K U N E O H O W D Y B U F F A L O E B E D E R M M U R K G U E R I L L A I O F E N T S O W H A T B A S S E T T T S L H H R U B B I S H Y D I V E Y I G I D A T S O J O U R N I N T R O E O E E L S P T H U N D E R C L O U D J F S P A H P U R I T A N C H E D D A R R R M O A R S A G E S A B O T A G E D D O R O E B R A W N I R O N S I D E L M E P E Q U I P D O F F S W I R E E E C A B C R E A M T E A C O L E Y N R S H L T E T E A T E T E O K A Y Z I C E P V T A F F E T A A S T E R I X R A S E R D Across 7 HS2, missing both ends, has party members instigating plots (7) 8 Company will sound decisive (7) 9 Transport protest (4) 10 Largely in order? Enlarge (2,7) 12 Transport to go too fast, not quietly: take time instead (5) 13 Shockingly, bold ULEZ militants say they’ll do this to enforcement cameras (8) 15 Broken transport systems’ core (4) 16 Surface of cycle path … (5) 17 … where vehicle hits edge of pothole: complain! (4) 18 Boatman abandons rail service: outside, small change, with no parking for transport (8) 20 Intelligent to go back to public transport (5) 21 Writer not exactly sincere about very right- wing origin (9) 22 Return transport (4) 24 Transport charge much involved in type of road rage (7) 25 Conflict, including about transport of supplies (7) Down 1 Burning neat alcohol powers this stove (4) 2 Peer brought up in case: most amusing (8) 3 Charged to have dissembled about zero- emissions transport (6) 4 Cowboy in west moved fast, not complacent in one transporting goods free of duty (8) 5 Achieved goal of speed limits around centre (6) 6 Reported transport passage (4) 11 One relays messages by mouth, initially enjoying trust while effecting eventual nemesis (2-7) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 Solution No 29,412 Quick crossword The Weekly cryptic � All solutions published next week By Boatman Sudoku Hard No 29,418 No 16,891